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Weir Farm

WEIR FARM NATIONAL  
HISTORIC SITE

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
STATEMENT

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SCANNED

1/8/2002

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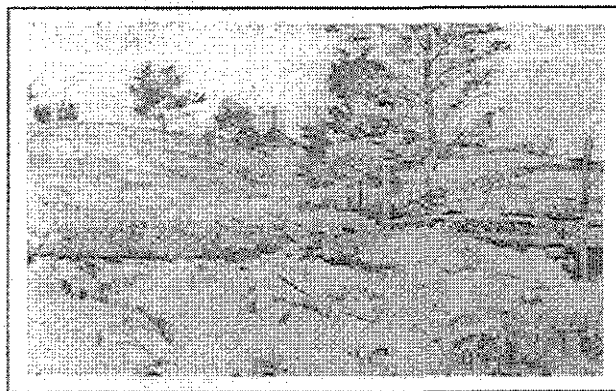
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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WEIR FARM

"...THE FARM REPRESENTS AN ARTISTIC AND  
SOCIAL PHENOMENON OF THE LATE 19TH  
CENTURY--THE ARTIST'S COUNTRY RETREAT.  
LIKE CHASE AT SHINNECOCK AND HASSAM  
AT COS COB--BOTH PLACES NOW  
SUBSTANTIALLY DESTROYED--WEIR  
PAINTED AT HIS FARM AT A TIME WHEN  
PAINTING OUTDOORS, IN THE SUNLIGHT,  
WAS A VITAL ARTISTIC ISSUE.



AT WEIR FARM, WEIR AND HIS FRIENDS  
CREATED THE INDIVIDUAL STYLES THAT  
MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN  
IMPRESSIONISM. WEIR FARM WAS MORE  
THAN A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK;  
IT INSPIRED CREATIVITY."

NICOLAI CIKOVSKY, JR.  
CURATOR OF AMERICAN ART  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY 16, 1990

*The purpose* of the Weir Farm General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement is to define the basic management philosophy that will guide park management decisions over the next 15 to 20 years and to direct the actions required to support that philosophy. This final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement includes changes made to the draft plan/statement and responds to comments received on that document.

The National Park Service staff and private consultants prepared several studies and reports in support of the management planning process; these are listed and summarized in the "Planning Background" section of the document. These research projects provided critical baseline data and detailed information to the planning team.

This document is divided into six parts. Part One provides background information about the park and the planning process; Part Two describes the plan and other alternatives considered; Part Three contains descriptions of the resources; Part Four describes the potential environmental consequences of the plan and the other alternatives considered; Part Five lists those contacted during the planning process; and Part Six contains various appendices.

For further information, please contact the site at the address below or telephone (203) 834-1896.

Superintendent  
Weir Farm National Historic Site  
735 Nod Hill Road  
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

## *Background*

The final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement presents the National Park Service's proposal for the management and use of Weir Farm National Historic Site and other alternatives considered during the planning process. In addition, it describes the potential impacts of the proposal and alternatives on park resources and operations, and on the surrounding neighborhood. This document will guide park management for the next 15 to 20 years.

Each alternative developed during the planning process responded to issues identified through public comment and research findings relating to resource management, visitor safety, facility development, collections, interpretation, and artistic activity.

The alternatives range from minimal to extensive site interpretation and provide for the protection and preservation of resources, while meeting identified planning objectives, as described in the "Weir Farm of the Future" section of this document. These planning objectives reflect the site's purpose established in its authorizing legislation (P.L. 101-485) (104 stat. 1171) to preserve the farm as "a significant site of the tradition of American Impressionism [while maintaining] the integrity of a setting that inspired artistic expression and encourages public enjoyment."

Projected operations costs and estimated development costs for implementation of the plan and alternatives are included in Appendix C. Impact topics analyzed in this document include visitor use/experience, cultural resources, natural environment, socioeconomic environment, and park operations.

The draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement was on formal public review for 60 days from June to August, 1994. The final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (which responds to public comments received during that period) will be made available for a 30-day no-action period, after which a Record of Decision will be

prepared and circulated to interested parties. The approval of the Record of Decision will complete the National Environmental Policy Act process.

## *The Plan*

The plan (identified as Alternative 1, the National Park Service's preferred alternative in the draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement) focuses on reuniting the historic property, presented as it appeared historically, with the art it inspired. The farm's buildings and landscape will appear to visitors as nearly as possible as they appeared to their historic occupants.

To retain the farm's peaceful environment, and to keep the historic landscape free of modern intrusion, a visitor center and an administration and maintenance facility will be developed at off-site locations, preferably in rehabilitated structures near the park. Criteria for acquiring properties for these purposes will include, but not be limited to, adequate access, proximity to resources, appropriate topography, absence of wetlands, minimal impact on neighbors, adequate lot size and configuration, and the presence of appropriate existing structures for redevelopment.

The park will be home to a vital artists-in-residence program. Housing will be provided in the Burlingham house and studio space located in the rehabilitated and expanded caretaker's garage/barn. Arts education is also central to the plan and will combine outreach to schools with on-site programs, including workshops in the rehabilitated Burlingham barn.

The proposal has been slightly changed from the preferred alternative presented in the draft plan. The changes were made in response to comments received during the public involvement period and in response to additional research findings.

The most noteworthy change is the increased emphasis on interpreting the contributions of Doris and Sperry Andrews to the site. Also, since the draft plan was

published, a development feasibility study for location of visitor and park support facilities was completed. This study indicates that few properties directly adjacent to the site have potential for redevelopment for park purposes, mainly due to access limitations. Properties between Nod Hill Road, Old Branchville Road, and Route 7 (northeast of the park) have the greatest potential for redevelopment for park purposes. Therefore, the final proposal suggests acquisition and redevelopment of parcels to the northeast of and near (not directly adjacent to) the park, and indicates that the Goldsmith, DiNapoli, and Meines properties would be appropriate for these uses. Because these properties are not directly adjacent to the park, a shuttle will be required for visitors who choose not to walk to the farm.

Due to public concerns regarding implementation costs, the plan includes recommendations for site managers to pursue fee area designation to allow revenue to be generated from special programs, special tours, and for general admissions. And, the plan includes recommendations for the National Park Service to work closely with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust to pursue alternative funding sources such as corporate, foundation, and private support. Finally, staffing projections have been decreased to lower operational costs and to reflect the NPS's ongoing streamlining effort.

After the draft plan was published, Congress enacted legislation authorizing the inclusion of Lot 18 in Wilton within the park's boundaries. Therefore, all discussions regarding the proposed inclusion of Lot 18 within the park's boundaries have been deleted from the final plan.

### *Alternative 2*

Alternative 2 would have emphasized the site's continuous use by preserving Weir Farm as a "work of art" where three generations of artists worked and lived. In this alternative, the current appearance of the landscape

would not have been altered, and the structures would have remained as they are to enhance visitors' appreciation of the site's continuous use since 1882.

In this alternative, a visitor center would have been located at an off-site location (within a three-mile radius of the site) in a rehabilitated structure. Visitors would have been shuttled to the site. An administrative/maintenance facility would have been developed in the northeast end of the park, off Weir Farm Lane.

Studio space for the artists-in-residence program would have been located in the rehabilitated Burlingham barn. Some arts education programs would have taken place at the farm, while others, including art workshops, would have been conducted at the off-site visitor center.

### *Alternative 3*

Alternative 3, the minimum action alternative, would have preserved the farm with only those actions necessary to protect and minimally interpret its current resources. No additional facilities would have been developed in this alternative. Limited visitor services would have been located on-site in the main barn, with the main house used for art exhibition. The Burlingham house would have been rehabilitated for administrative offices, and space would have been leased off-site for maintenance operations.

No artists' studios or accommodations would have been provided in this alternative. Art workshops for schools would have taken place in the rehabilitated Burlingham barn.

### *Conclusion*

The proposals that comprise the final plan were selected because they best satisfy the intent and provisions of the site's enabling legislation (P.L. 101-485) (104 stat. 1171), which authorized the establishment of Weir Farm National Historic Site.

# CONTENTS

PART ONE: BACKGROUND		VISITOR EXPERIENCE	30
		WEIR COMPLEX	31
INTRODUCTION	1	BURLINGHAM COMPLEX	32
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SITE	1	POND AND WOODLAND AREA	32
ACQUISITION HISTORY	1	NEW FACILITIES	32
SITE DESCRIPTION	1	BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND	
ROLE OF THE WEIR FARM HERITAGE TRUST	2	LAND PROTECTION	33
PLANNING BACKGROUND	4	PROGRAMS	33
METHODOLOGY	4	ALTERNATIVE 3: WEIR FARM AS A PROTECTED	
PARK PURPOSE	5	CULTURAL RESOURCE	34
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WEIR FARM	5	CONCEPT	34
PLANNING ISSUES	6	VISITOR EXPERIENCE	34
INTERPRETIVE THEMES	7	WEIR COMPLEX	34
MANAGEMENT ZONING	8	BURLINGHAM COMPLEX	35
RESOURCE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH	10	POND AND WOODLAND AREA	35
WEIR FARM OF THE FUTURE	14	NEW FACILITIES	35
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	14	BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND	
FACILITIES	16	LAND PROTECTION	35
COLLECTIONS	18	PROGRAMS	36
ARTISTIC ACTIVITY	19	ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED	36
VISITOR EXPERIENCE	20	DEVELOPING AN ON-SITE VISITOR CENTER	36
TRANSPORTATION	20	RESTORING THE LANDSCAPE	
PARTNERSHIPS	21	TO THE WEIR PERIOD	36
		REFURNISHING THE MAIN HOUSE	
PART TWO:		TO THE WEIR PERIOD	37
THE PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED	23	PROVIDING MUSEUM-QUALITY	
		ENVIRONMENTS IN HISTORIC STRUCTURES	37
MODIFICATIONS MADE TO THE PREFERRED		EXPANDING THE SITE TO INCLUDE A	
ALTERNATIVE TO FORM THE FINAL PLAN	23	PROTECTION AREA	37
THE PLAN: WEIR FARM AS THE MARRIAGE		ALLOWING AN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE TO	
OF LANDSCAPE AND ART	24	OCCUPY THE UPSTAIRS OF THE MAIN HOUSE	37
CONCEPT	24		
VISITOR EXPERIENCE	25	PART THREE:	
WEIR COMPLEX	25	AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	41
BURLINGHAM COMPLEX	26		
POND AND WOODLAND AREA	28	CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	41
NEW FACILITIES	28	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	41
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND		THE ARTISTIC PROCESS CONTINUES AT	
LAND PROTECTION	29	WEIR FARM	46
PROGRAMS	29	CHANGES IN THE LANDSCAPE	46
ESTIMATED COSTS TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN	30	HISTORIC STRUCTURES	47
ALTERNATIVE 2: WEIR FARM AS A WORK OF ART	30	ARCHEOLOGY	49
CONCEPT	30	COLLECTIONS	49

# WEIR FARM

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	51	COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL, STATE, AND	
CLIMATE AND AIR QUALITY	51	LOCAL LAWS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS,	
TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY, AND SOILS	51	AND REGULATIONS	63
WATER RESOURCES	51	NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY	
FLOODPLAIN	52	ACT COMPLIANCE	63
WETLANDS	52	CULTURAL RESOURCE COMPLIANCE	63
VEGETATION / HABITATS	52	NATURAL RESOURCE COMPLIANCE	64
WILDLIFE	52	STATE PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS	65
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED		LOCAL REGULATIONS	65
SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITATS	53		
PRIME OR UNIQUE AGRICULTURAL LANDS	53	PART FIVE: CONSULTATION AND	
STATE GROUNDWATER QUALITY STANDARDS	53	COORDINATION / PREPARERS	67
STATE STREAM CLASSIFICATIONS	53		
MARINE SANCTUARIES / COASTAL		PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT	67
ZONE MANAGEMENT	54	SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SCOPING	67
SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	54	SPECIAL THANKS	68
LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE	54	PLANNING TEAM, ADVISORS, AND	
EXISTING INTERPRETATION AND VISITOR USE	55	CONSULTANTS	69
PROGRAMS	55		
		PART SIX: APPENDICES	71
PART FOUR: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES	57		
		APPENDIX A: ENABLING LEGISLATION	71
IMPACTS COMMON TO THE PLAN		APPENDIX B: SECTION 106 CONSULTATION	
AND ALTERNATIVES	57	REQUIREMENTS FOR PLAN UNDER TAKINGS	74
IMPACTS ON VISITOR EXPERIENCE	57	APPENDIX C: COST ESTIMATES	76
IMPACTS ON CULTURAL RESOURCES	57	APPENDIX D: CRITERIA FOR BOUNDARY	
IMPACTS ON NATURAL RESOURCES	57	ADJUSTMENTS	82
IMPACTS ON PARK OPERATIONS	58	APPENDIX E: LAND PROTECTION PLAN	
IMPACTS ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC		ADDENDUM	83
ENVIRONMENT	58	APPENDIX F: GLOSSARY	84
CUMULATIVE / UNAVOIDABLE		APPENDIX G: REFERENCES	85
ADVERSE IMPACTS	58	APPENDIX H: EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS	
IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE		RECEIVED ON DRAFT PLAN	88
COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES	58		
IMPACTS UNIQUE TO EACH ALTERNATIVE	59	TABLES	
IMPACTS ON VISITOR EXPERIENCE	59	SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES	38
IMPACTS ON CULTURAL RESOURCES	60		
IMPACTS ON NATURAL RESOURCES	61	FIGURES	
IMPACTS ON PARK OPERATIONS	62	CONTEXT MAP	3
IMPACTS ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC		MANAGEMENT ZONING MAP	9
ENVIRONMENT	62	INTERIOR OF HISTORIC WEIR STUDIO	26
IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE		THE PLAN	27
COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES	63		



PART ONE: BACKGROUND



ALBERT WOLFINGER, *J. Alden Weir*, 1877

PENCIL ON PAPER, 12 1/4 X 8 IN.

PRIVATE COLLECTION



## Introduction

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SITE

Weir Farm National Historic Site, established by Congress on October 31, 1990 (P.L. 101-485) (104 stat. 1171), preserves and interprets historically significant properties and landscapes associated with the life and work of J. Alden Weir (1852-1919), one of the founders of the Impressionist tradition in American art. According to the site's enabling legislation (Appendix A), the National Park Service (NPS) and its principal partner at Weir Farm, the Weir Farm Heritage Trust, are charged with preserving the site and maintaining "the integrity of a setting that inspired artistic expression." Weir Farm is one of only two sites within the national park system that focus primarily on fine art.

### ACQUISITION HISTORY

Weir Farm's preservation was initiated by a group of neighbors and concerned individuals who would not accept the loss of Weir Pond and the farm to suburban development. In 1985, this group enlisted the help of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national land conservation organization dedicated to preserving important natural, cultural, and historical resources for public use. TPL took the initiative in protecting the land by purchasing key acreage temporarily until a permanent management agency could be identified. In 1989, members of the group that initially sought TPL's intervention formed the Weir Farm Heritage Trust, the source of grass-roots support for preserving the property.

In 1988, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection purchased the majority of the site from TPL and then donated it to the National Park Service in 1992. In 1993, TPL transferred an additional two-acre parcel including the main house, the Weir and Young studios, and associated barns and outbuildings to the NPS. In 1994, TPL and the Trust worked together to acquire Lot 18 in Wilton, the last remaining undeveloped land adjacent to the site that was part of the historic farm's original 238 acres. Also, the State

of Connecticut transferred the Caretakers house parcel to the NPS. In October 1994, Congress enacted legislation authorizing a boundary expansion to incorporate Lot 18 and its associated unbuilt road into the site's boundary, expanding the park by 2.9 acres.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

Weir Farm National Historic Site is located in the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton in Fairfield County, Connecticut. The site is within the Fifth Congressional District.

Weir Farm NHS includes 60 of the 238 acres J. Alden Weir purchased between 1882 and 1907 in a part of these towns known as Branchville. Only about 45 miles from New York City and 25 miles from Long Island Sound, the farm lies atop a north-south ridge in the southwestern Connecticut upland.

The topography of the farm undulates between gentle and rather steep slopes and includes glacial boulders and outcroppings, woodlands, and seven wetlands.

The site embraces properties and landscape features in three distinct complexes set off from each other by the intersection of Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane. The Weir complex includes approximately 10 acres north of Pelham Lane and west of Nod Hill Road. In addition to minor outbuildings, garden and orchard remnants, and various fields edged with stone walls and hedgerows, it contains four major structures:

- The main house, portions of which were built in the eighteenth century, enlarged in ca 1825, and both modified and enlarged at Weir's instruction in 1888, 1900, and 1911;
- The Weir studio, built by 1885, three years after Weir purchased the farm;
- The studio of sculptor Mahonri Mackintosh Young, husband of Weir's daughter Dorothy, built in 1933-34;
- The main barn, built between the late-eighteenth century and the early-nineteenth century.

The Burlingham complex, south of Pelham Lane and west of Nod Hill Road, is the former Webb farm that Weir purchased in 1907, which eventually became the home for his daughter, Cora Weir Burlingham, and her husband, Charles Burlingham. Approximately 12 acres in extent, it contains a woodshed, a tool house, sunken and terraced gardens, stone walls, former farm fields, minor outbuildings, and three major structures:

- The Burlingham house, built between 1748 and 1782, occupied by Weir's daughter Cora and her husband, Charles Burlingham, and enlarged at her instruction in the 1930s and 1940s;
- The Burlingham barn, built sometime between the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century;
- The woodshed on the Burlingham farm, dating to the mid-nineteenth century.

The third complex, the pond and woodland area on the east side of Nod Hill Road, represents the largest portion of the park and consists of approximately 38 acres. It contains the caretaker's house, dating to the mid- to late-nineteenth century and the garage/barn, dating to the early- to mid-twentieth century; the pond Weir built in 1896 with prize money from the Boston Art Club; the majority of the site's wetlands and woodlands; and vestiges of an old wagon road, trails, and stone walls.

There is also evidence of once-cultivated fields and meadows, terraces, a fishing bridge, a boat house, and a summer house, improvements Weir and successive occupants made that are no longer present on the landscape.

Weir Farm NHS (60 acres) is one component of a network of nearly 300 acres of contiguous open space. To the southwest, The Nature Conservancy operates the 113-acre Weir-Leary-White Preserve; to the northeast, the Town of Ridgefield owns approximately 33 acres of conservation land; and, also to the north-







east, the Connecticut Department of Transportation owns approximately 86 acres. The site's northwestern and southeastern boundaries are rimmed by residential development. The location of Weir Farm, and adjacent conservation land and open space, are shown on the Context Map.

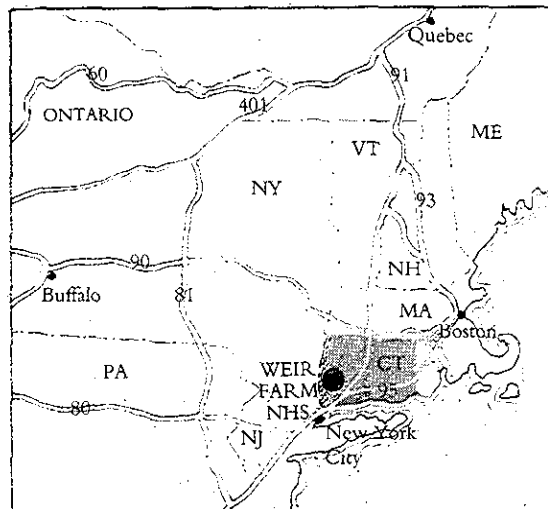
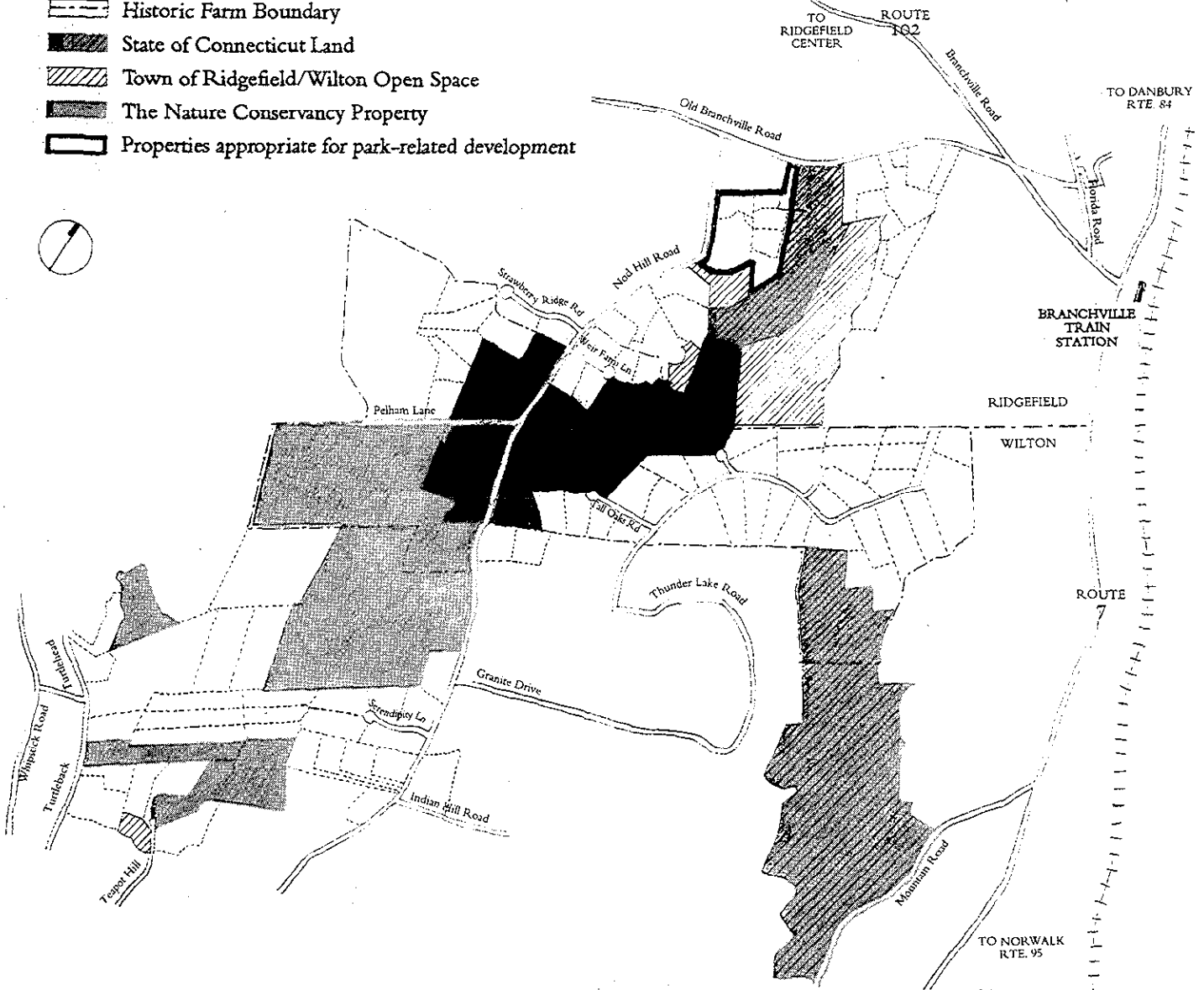
### ROLE OF WEIR FARM HERITAGE TRUST

The private nonprofit Weir Farm Heritage Trust is the National Park Service's primary partner in planning for Weir Farm and in developing visitor programming. Founded in 1989 to support the site's protection and eventual establishment as a national historic site, the Trust served as interim manager of the property from October 31, 1990, when it was designated a national historic site, until January 1992, when NPS staff arrived at Branchville. It continues to function at the site through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.

The Trust's mission is to enhance public understanding of the farm's cultural and natural heritage, to perpetuate its artistic tradition, and to ensure its long-term preservation. It is a membership organization governed by a board of directors and a separate council of overseers, the latter composed largely of regional and state leaders in the arts and historic preservation. An executive director and other staff at the site manage the Trust's day-to-day affairs. Trust programs are funded largely through private donations, and membership stands at about 300 persons.

# CONTEXT MAP

-  Weir Farm National Historic Site
-  Historic Farm Boundary
-  State of Connecticut Land
-  Town of Ridgefield/Wilton Open Space
-  The Nature Conservancy Property
-  Properties appropriate for park-related development



## *Planning Background*

### **METHODOLOGY**

The National Park Service (NPS) takes an interdisciplinary approach to planning. Staff skilled in the fields of art history, landscape architecture, architecture, community planning, natural resource management, cultural resource management, historic preservation, interpretation, and collections management composed the planning team for Weir Farm; members of the Weir Farm Heritage Trust were also included on the team.

To acquaint the community and interested groups and individuals with the NPS planning process, to solicit comments or concerns regarding the future of Weir Farm, and to report on the status of planning, the NPS and the Weir Farm Heritage Trust published an informational newsletter in July 1992 and distributed it to about 1000 residents of Wilton and Ridgefield, farm visitors, and others. The team then sponsored a public meeting on July 15 at the Wilton Library.

As a starting point for subsequent team planning sessions, Weir Farm's purpose, as defined in its enabling legislation, was reviewed at this first public meeting. The team then developed a significance statement for the site as well as management objectives that describe the conditions the team considered necessary to realize the site's purpose in a manner consistent with NPS policy. Members also developed interpretive themes—ideas that help communicate a site's meaning to visitors—for the site. Finally, the planning team focused on identifying obstacles or issues that might inhibit the NPS from achieving these objectives. Describing and suggesting ways to resolve these issues became the subject of later workshop sessions as well as the focus of this document.

To learn how they perceive Weir Farm at present and how they envision its future, the team then invited 24 artists, art historians, and art educators to attend workshops at the site. At these workshops, participants

isolated alternative forms of management and interpretation, and the team then refined these over the next few months. At the same time, the NPS directed staff and consultants to gather data on the historical, natural, and cultural resources of Weir Farm. These studies are described in this section under "Resource Analysis and Research."

In March 1993, the team developed and distributed a second newsletter to about 2,500 persons and sponsored a second public meeting to explain and gather reaction to preliminary alternatives for Weir Farm's future. The public response expressed at this meeting and on the mailback forms included in both newsletters allowed the team to continue to refine alternatives and to develop three different plans for managing, developing, and interpreting Weir Farm. The three alternatives, and the potential environmental impacts of implementing each of them, were presented in the draft document.

The draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement was available for formal public review for 60 days, from June 17 to August 17, 1994. During this review period, the team solicited written and verbal comments, and held a public meeting at the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield on July 16, 1994, to describe the plan and address public concerns. Sixteen people attended the meeting. On July 27, 1994, the team made a presentation at Ridgefield's selectmen meeting. The team also distributed approximately 2,500 summaries of the draft plan with a mail back card included for comments and made available about 30 copies of the unabridged version of the draft plan. A total of 63 responses were received.

The team carefully reviewed all responses and incorporated substantive comments in the final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. This plan, once approved by the director of the National Park Service's North Atlantic Region, will be implemented over the next 15 to 20 years as funding and other contingencies allow.

## PARK PURPOSE

The threefold purpose of Weir Farm National Historic Site, as described in its enabling legislation, is to 1) preserve a significant site associated with the tradition of American Impressionism; 2) maintain the integrity of a setting that inspired artistic expression; and 3) continue to offer opportunities for people to study and create art at the farm.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WEIR FARM

Weir Farm celebrates the life and work of the painter J. Alden Weir (1852-1919), a major and pioneering figure in the American Impressionist movement. Weir was a *founding member* of what became known as the "Ten American Painters," a group of artists based in New York and New England whose reaction to the exhibitions of the prestigious Society of American Artists late in 1897 caused a major controversy in the turn-of-the-century art world.

"The Ten" did not publicly identify themselves as Impressionists, but by the 1890s most of them—Weir, Edmund Tarbell, Childe Hassam, John Twachtman, and, later, William Merritt Chase—were painting in this manner. They shared an interest in what art historian William H. Gerds has termed "the radiance of the sunlit landscape." In an 1891 issue of the American journal *Art Amateur*, one critic explained Impressionism as: "The theory is that colors must no longer be mixed on the palette, but are to be laid side by side, either in dots or dashes, in pure tints, and left to mix optically on the retina." American Impressionism showed an intense interest in place and invigorated the tradition of landscape art in America.

American Impressionism marked the first decided effort of artists in this country to break away from aesthetic conventions taught in academies in the United States after the Civil War. Impressionism represented what Gerds has called "an acceptable modernism" for the time, a transition between the precepts of academic realism and abstraction in art. According to art histo-

rian Richard Boyle, American Impressionists "broke with the older conception of a picture as a classically ordered unit in time and space, and substituted the casual passage of time, the "fleeting moment."

Weir Farm, which J. Alden Weir acquired in 1882, became a frequent destination for his circle of artist friends; the farm in turn became the subject of many of their paintings. Art historians have argued that Weir's move to the Branchville farm inspired his own turn toward Impressionism, a movement he had once disparaged.

Weir Farm, J. Alden Weir's summer home and workplace for 37 years, thus preserves a way of life once shared by many important figures in American arts and letters. What drew him to the farm initially was its landscape and the opportunity it offered to "experience nature" as well as to take artistic inspiration from it. Located within easy reach of his New York City home, for Weir the farm was a retreat from urban life which, by the late-nineteenth century, was increasingly viewed as harmful to the body and spirit.

By 1890, Weir and his colleagues were doing more and more of their painting outdoors, *en plein air*. They modified the French Impressionist technique of pure color, broken brushwork, and intense light into an American idiom. Weir and others focused increasingly on landscape as their subject matter, but unlike Albert Bierstadt and Frederick Edwin Church, American landscape painters of the previous generation who sought to depict the extraordinary, untamed, and dramatic on canvas, the American Impressionists painted familiar, cultivated landscapes located in their own backyards. By repeatedly depicting selected sites in Connecticut and elsewhere in New England in their art, they helped create a heightened sense of appreciation for these landscapes.

Weir's house and studio are remarkably little changed since he used them a century ago. The sculptor Mahonri Young, married to Weir's daughter Dorothy, built a much larger studio next to Weir's that, too,

remains essentially unaltered since Young's death in 1957. The studios are simple wooden structures, each with a wall of windows on the north side. Inside are the creative tools and other paraphernalia that belonged to the site's artists—Weir, his daughter Dorothy, Young, and painter Sperry Andrews, who has used the studios since Young's death and is the farm's current resident artist.

Today, Weir Farm is a historic vernacular Connecticut landscape. Additionally, it has survived with a level of documentation and physical integrity surpassed by few artists' homes and studios. Perched on the top of winding Nod Hill Road, the farm is dotted with clusters of red clapboard buildings and overlaid with an intricate pattern of fieldstone walls. Remnants of historic orchards and hay fields recall a long tradition of working the land and enhance the feeling among those who visit the farm today that it is, as it was historically, a strongly familiar, welcoming place.

### **PLANNING ISSUES**

Based on its analysis of public comments and of the findings of the resource reports on the site, the planning team identified a set of interrelated issues involved in making Weir Farm an effective national historic site.

#### **Resource Management**

Museum-quality environmental controls necessary to preserve collections of furnishings and art in the main house, the Weir studio, and the Young studio cannot be installed without compromising the fabric, structure, or appearance of these historic buildings. Alternative methods for collections preservation—including rotating collections on a regular basis from exhibition to storage and controlling the microclimate around exhibited works of art by encasing them in glass box frames—are required to furnish and interpret these interiors.

The local deer population is browsing on the park's vegetation. Resource protection strategies, such as fencing or wrapping young growth or other methods

should be considered to preserve existing vegetation and provide for additional plantings in the future. Such strategies may affect the landscape restoration specified in the plan.

Finally, land protection strategies must be devised to protect the site's historic setting and the privacy of adjacent property owners. Currently, adjacent residential properties are visible from the pond and the former wagon road. In addition, in the past, vegetation was removed on farm property near the pond to maintain water views from the surrounding homes. Properties on two of the site's boundaries are extensively developed. In order to maintain the integrity of the historic site, vegetation management practices along the park's periphery are advised in the future.

#### **Visitor Safety**

The site is bisected by small, winding roadways on which commuters travel at high, and often unsafe, speeds. Pedestrian and motorist safety is thus a concern, as is the difficulty that buses and recreational vehicles may have in negotiating these narrow roads.

#### **Facilities**

When fully operational, Weir Farm will require facilities for visitors, staff, maintenance and other equipment, and museum collections. Only two historic structures on the site, the Burlingham house and the Burlingham barn, can potentially be adapted for such uses because, unlike the main house, barn, and the studios, Weir acquired them late in his tenure at the farm and their use was secondary to the park's historic significance.

The need to preserve the fragile ecology of Weir Farm and numerous features of its cultural landscape requires that the NPS carefully evaluate all options for securing needed facilities, through new construction or reuse of existing structures on- and off-site.

### Collections

Unlike other former homes that are now national historic sites—for example, those of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens in Cornish, New Hampshire—Weir Farm does not have ample collections of the work of Weir and others who drew, painted, made prints, and sculpted at the site. Without such works, it will be difficult to interpret effectively the life and art of Weir, Young, Andrews, and other Weir Farm artists, as well as the intimate relationship between this landscape and their creative work. The National Park Service can acquire art only through donation or purchase with private funds. The Weir Farm Heritage Trust will continue to assist the park in establishing an appropriate art collection.

Moreover, museum-quality exhibition and storage space is currently not available at Weir Farm. Facilities must be provided for the proper care and storage of the site's current and future collection.

### Interpretation

To understand the rich artistic heritage of Weir Farm, artists, school groups, and national park visitors in general must be exposed to exhibits, programs, and other forms of interpretation that convey the historic and aesthetic significance of the site. Weir Farm's modest collection of art and its minimal facilities must be enhanced to support this interpretive programming.

### Artistic Activity

Landscape artists from the region and the New York metropolitan area, as well as area schools, have consistently shown interest in using the site to create art and as a setting for art-related programs. Artists who wish to use the site need quiet and an uncrowded space in which to draw and paint, as well as such amenities as parking and rest rooms. Provisions must be made to accommodate these activities.

### INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The planning team identified the following themes to guide visitor interpretation:

- Weir Farm, the summer home and workplace of American painter Julian Alden Weir, became an important place in the development of American Impressionism, an art movement characterized in part by the celebration of place. Weir Farm was also a destination and inspiration for numerous artistic figures of the late-nineteenth century.
- Weir Farm continues to serve as a setting and inspiration for visiting artists. In addition, it has been continuously occupied by working artists, including Mahonri Young and Doris and Sperry Andrews, who have preserved the character of the property even as they adapted it to their own needs.

To enhance visitors' understanding and appreciation of Weir Farm, the site's interpretive mission will also embrace these secondary themes:

- Weir Farm was protected from development and established as a national historic site due to the foresight, commitment, coordination, and effort of local citizens (including Doris and Sperry Andrews and Cora Weir Burlingham), private organizations, and public agencies.
- Artists have historically influenced environmental and conservation movements by producing images that served to galvanize political response.
- The relationship of landscape and art has evolved because of technological advances (for example, premixed paints in tubes) and changing attitudes towards nature.
- Weir Farm contains a variety of natural and cultural resources that illustrate several historical periods and a variety of land uses.
- Paintings, sculpture, and etchings and other prints have been produced at Weir Farm, and the process of working in each of these media requires distinctive skills and equipment.



## MANAGEMENT ZONING

Management zoning, a concept that divides land into sectors depending on its primary uses, management objectives, and the nature of its resources, will guide the use and management of land and waters at Weir Farm.

Weir Farm has been divided into four zones—cultural, natural, development, and transportation. The cultural zone has been divided further into the protected and the protected/adaptive use subzones. The locations of these zones are shown on the Management Zoning Map.

### Cultural Zone

The resources contributing to Weir Farm's historic significance and thus to its establishment as a national historic site are within the cultural zone, which will be managed to preserve, protect, and interpret these resources and their settings.

**Protected Subzone.** This subzone includes the majority of the site, including the Weir complex and the pond (created by Weir in 1896) and woodland area. It is largely composed of those sites, structures, objects, and landscapes on the property Weir acquired in 1882, all significant because of their association with the artist. Because they are critical to site interpretation, resources in this subzone will be preserved or restored and interpreted for the public.

**Protected/Adaptive Use Subzone.** This subzone consists largely of the caretaker's house and the former Webb Farm, which Weir acquired in 1907 and Cora Weir Burlingham later modified. Historic structures and landscapes in this subzone may be modified for special uses or administrative functions provided that the historic character of the site is retained.

All uses of historic resources will be subject to preservation and public safety requirements. No administrative or public use will be permitted if it is determined to threaten the safety of users or the stability, charac-

ter, or integrity of a cultural landscape, an historic structure, or the museum objects within a structure.

New structures, landscape features, and utilities could be constructed in this subzone if other on- or off-site solutions are infeasible and if such construction does not compromise the integrity of the historic landscape or structures. First consideration will be given to reusing existing historic features. New construction located within this subzone will be subject to the design considerations outlined in the "Cultural Environment" section in Part Three of this document.

### Protected Natural Zone

The protected natural zone includes the site's wetlands. Because of their fragility and ecological significance, human intrusion is minimized to protect the ecological values of the resources in this zone.

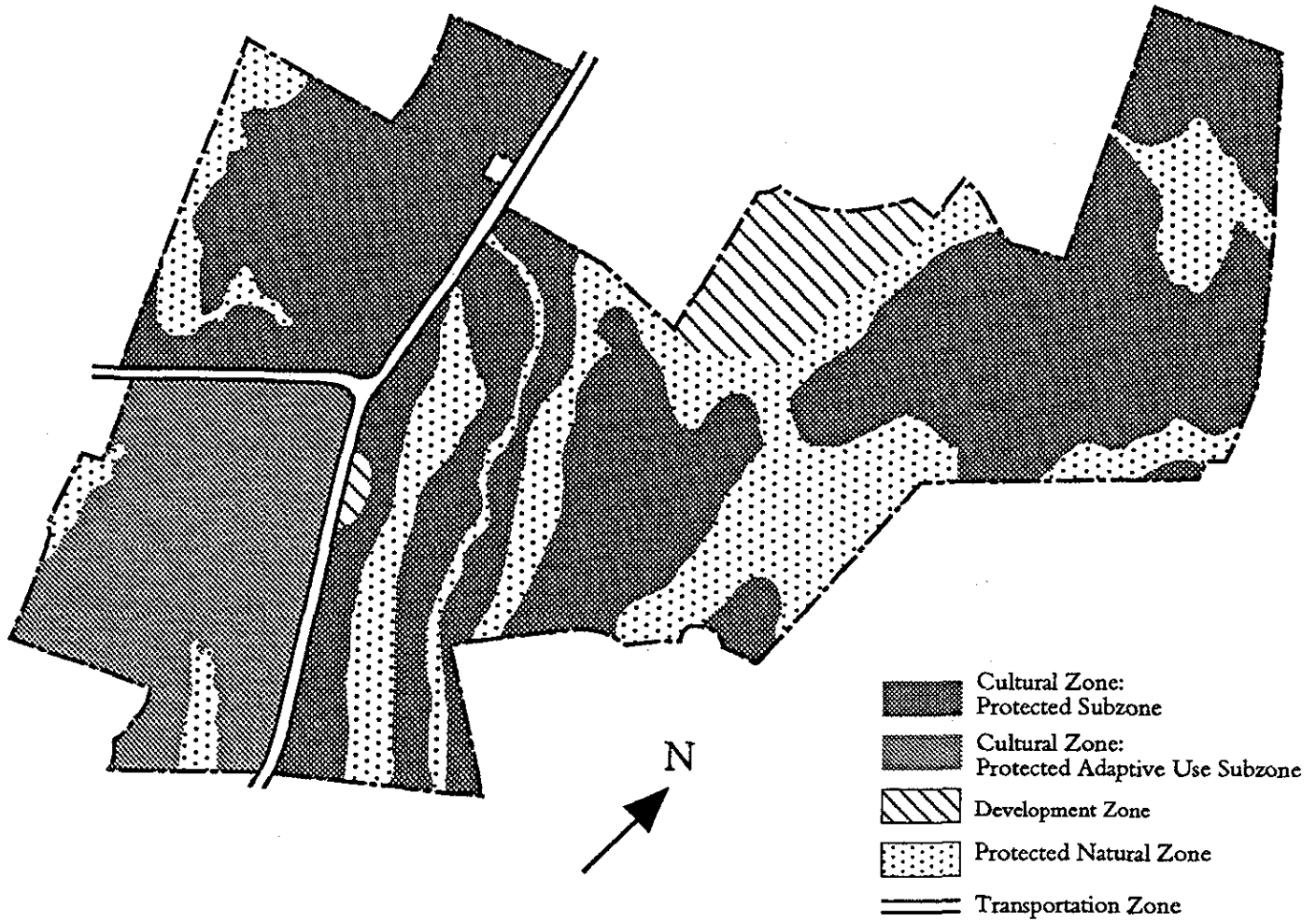
Development in this zone will be limited to features such as boardwalks, trailside displays of information, and directional signs that have no adverse effect on natural processes, are essential for management, and enhance visitors' appreciation of the site's resources. Only pedestrian traffic will be permitted in this zone.

### Development Zone

The planning team identified a development zone in response to the proposal in Alternative 2 to develop an administration and maintenance facility on park property. Although no such development is proposed in the park's plan, this zone reflects the area with greatest development potential for park-related facilities.

The development zone includes lands located along Weir Farm Lane and Nod Hill Road and encompasses resources that could be directly modified through park development or intensive use. If other options for development of park-related facilities are not possible, this zone would be managed to provide and maintain facilities serving park managers and visitors, including support facilities and utilities. To mitigate the effects of

MANAGEMENT ZONING MAP



such development on the historic character of the site and on park neighbors, the zone would be restricted to the smallest area necessary, and the impacts of development and use within it will be managed toward the same end.

### **Transportation Zone**

The transportation zone includes Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane, non-federal lands used for transportation. The park is not the destination nor is it the source for these routes.

## **RESOURCE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH**

The planning team identified several distinct areas of research necessary to develop comprehensive alternatives for the future of Weir Farm and an assessment of the costs and impacts of each. A summary of the scope and findings of each research effort follows.

### **Cultural Landscape Report**

The landscape of Weir Farm changed in numerous respects during the occupancies of the Weir, Young, and Andrews families. To trace the landscape changes over time, the NPS commissioned a consultant to conduct research and prepare the first volume of the cultural landscape report: site history and existing conditions (Child Associates and Zaitzevsky, 1994). The report documents the history of the landscape and includes a detailed inventory of existing conditions.

Research reveals that the landscape known to Weir and Young was far more open than the landscape visitors see today. The majority of the wooded areas that now exist are less than 50 years old and arose through natural processes of vegetative succession after Dorothy Weir Young ceased to farm the land. The numerous large oaks dispersed throughout the farm, surrounded by smaller second-growth woods, once provided shade for grazing animals in open fields.

The second volume of the report, initiated in 1995, will include an analysis of the significance and integrity of the landscape and a treatment plan.

### **Dam Evaluation**

In 1896, with money won at the Boston Art Club, J. Alden Weir built a pond on his Branchville property by blocking a watercourse with a stone dam that is now nearly a century old. At some later point, the spillway was made higher to raise the water level in the pond, increasing the load on the dam. Staff of the North Atlantic Region evaluated the dam to address park managers' concerns regarding the condition of the structure (NPS, 1993a).

The report found the structure in fair condition and advised that it be stabilized by lowering the spillway so as to drop the water level in the pond slightly and by filling one weakened section of the structure. The method and material for repairing this structural weakness is now under study.

### **Development Feasibility Study for Visitor Orientation Center and Maintenance Facility**

In the preferred alternative of the draft plan, the planning team identified the need for a visitor center and an administration and maintenance facility, and recommended that those facilities be developed outside of the park's current boundaries to help protect the fragile, intimate environment of Weir Farm. To determine where such facilities could best be located, the NPS commissioned an architectural firm to conduct an analysis of the development potential of properties adjacent to and nearby the park (Heritage Partners, 1994).

The architectural firm recommended that, based on access, road conditions, public comments, impacts on neighbors, topography, conditions of existing structures, and willingness of property owners to sell their property, that lands to the northeast of the park, in between Nod Hill Road, Old Branchville Road, and Route 7 in Ridgefield, would be the best location for such facilities. Of particular potential are the Goldsmith, DiNapoli, and Meines properties. Use of these properties for park facilities would afford minimal visual and aural impact on park neighbors, allow park

traffic to be diverted to the visitor center parking area before it reaches Nod Hill Road, and permit visitors to walk from the visitor center to the park via existing woodland trails.

### Ecological Inventories

To develop data on the ecology of the farm, the NPS relied on two ecological inventories prepared earlier, one of the Weir-Leary-White Preserve conducted by The Nature Conservancy's Connecticut chapter (The Nature Conservancy, 1976) and the other of the national historic site itself, conducted by the Division of Natural Resources, North Atlantic Region (NPS, 1991).

The 1991 survey identified four major plant communities at Weir Farm—an oak/maple-leaved viburnum forest, a maple/ash/New York fern forest, a red maple/sweet pepperbush forest, and a red maple/spicebush forest. These plant communities are typical of Connecticut; there are no threatened, rare, or endangered species or critical habitats found within the national historic site.

### Environmental Evaluation of Buildings at Weir Farm

Because they are central to understanding the work of artists associated with the site, collections of art and art-related artifacts must be acquired. The site will also build other major collections, such as furnishings historically used in the main house, the Weir studio, and the Young studio, and will acquire documents associated with Weir, Young, and Andrews. Parts of these collections will be exhibited in these three structures, either in exhibitions or in furnished rooms.

To determine the capacity of these historic structures to maintain an environment in which collections can be safely exhibited and preserved, and to suggest means of improving interior environments that would not pose potential long-term threats to the integrity of these structures, the NPS commissioned an environ-

mental evaluation of the buildings at Weir Farm (Art Preservation Services, 1992).

This report concluded that nonintrusive measures—such as exhibit cases with microclimatically controlled environments for such sensitive materials as paintings and certain furnishings—will be needed to provide adequate environmental control in these historic spaces.

### Garden Plan

In 1990, prior to NPS management of Weir Farm, the Ridgefield Garden Club commissioned Rudy Favretti to prepare a restoration plan for the “secret garden,” the small garden area north of the Weir studio (Favretti, 1990). After the report was prepared, new information became available that provided additional documentation for the project. Based on the new information and additional research, the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation prepared detailed restoration plans for all garden features, including plantings, fences, and gates (NPS, 1994a). A related part of this project involved archeological investigations conducted by the Cultural Resource Center, North Atlantic Region. The archeological investigations documented the garden's configuration, and in particular, the location of the wood fence which historically encircled the garden (NPS, 1994).

### Historic Furnishings Report

The historic structures at Weir Farm contain furnishings from the Weir, Young, and Andrews tenures. To determine the appearance of these interiors over time, staff of the Division of Historic Furnishings, Harpers Ferry Center, NPS, interviewed Weir, Young, and Andrews family members and conducted extensive documentary research. This information was presented in a historic furnishings report (NPS, 1994b), which also includes furnishing plans for the main house, the Weir studio, and the Young studio.

The document indicates that the interiors of the first floor of the main house changed very little between 1919, when Weir died, and 1957, when Mahonri

Young ceased to occupy the house. The only major alteration after Weir's tenure, was the library on the first floor. Changes during the Andrews family tenure include the modified kitchen and additional furnishings. The Weir studio today contains some furnishings dating from Weir's use of the building, although the studio appeared much less cluttered during Weir's time than it does today. The Young studio contained additional sinks and modeling equipment during the years that Young sculpted there.

### **Historic Structure Report**

The number and appearance of structures on the site also changed over the years that the Weir, Young, and Andrews families occupied the place. Staff of the Building Conservation Branch, Cultural Resource Center, North Atlantic Region, researched the evolution of the site's structures and evaluated their significance and integrity. This information has been compiled into a draft historic structure report (NPS, 1995), which includes historical information and a detailed inventory of existing features.

The draft report reveals that all of the known structures on the site were either already present, built, or modified during the years these artists lived at Weir Farm. The last significant structure to be built was the Young studio, completed in 1934. Of the minor outbuildings, the last was the Burlingham garden shed, built in 1940.

### **Painting Sites Study**

The farm's landscape inspired J. Alden Weir's art for nearly four decades and may indeed have affected his *transition to Impressionism*. Additionally, many of Weir's friends and colleagues, including Childe Hassam, John Twachtman, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and Emil Carlsen, painted scenes on the farm during visits there.

Park staff conducted a survey suggesting that Weir completed more than 250 paintings of the Branchville farm (NPS, 1994c). Of these, about 50 scenes have

been discovered and documented. In conjunction with works of art depicting this landscape, these sites offer insight into Weir's artistic process and permit a precise understanding both of how the site appeared during Weir's tenure and how it has changed. Weir used the whole property for his work. The study documents Weir's connection to the landscape as well as the landscape's significant cultural and natural resources.

Analysis of the connection between Mahonri Young's art and the Weir Farm landscape will be conducted in the future with images from the Young collection at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

### **Survey of Comparable Sites**

Because Weir Farm NHS was established so recently, visitation figures exist for only five years; ten years of data are normally required to provide statistically relevant projections of future visitation. To develop projections without this information, planning staff of the North Atlantic Region surveyed more mature sites with similar themes to assess visitation patterns and facility development (NPS, 1992a).

Based on an examination of 16 comparable sites, the survey estimated that annual visitation will range between 25,000 and 40,000 persons.

### **Visitor Study**

The University of Vermont conducted a survey of visitor attitudes, perceptions, and demographics to establish baseline data that will help staff assess the site's effectiveness in the future (Manning, 1994). Manning surveyed 149 persons, whose responses to questions about crowding and the elements that constitute a pleasant or disagreeable experience helped the team develop alternative proposals for managing visitors.

Despite the lack of visitor facilities and interpretive programs at the time of the survey, visitors reacted strongly to the "peace and quiet of the area" and the opportunity to "enjoy the natural environment." In

addition, 56 percent of visitors stayed at least two hours; 19.4 percent stayed three hours or longer. These lengths of stay are noteworthy in view of the undeveloped nature of the site.

The survey also showed an overwhelming opposition (63 percent and higher) to horseback riding, bicycling, and walking dogs at the site. Visitors instead felt strongly that only bird watching, nature study, walking, and ice skating should be allowed at Weir Farm.

Almost three quarters of the respondents thought the site should recreate portions of the pastoral landscape that J. Alden Weir created and the Youngs maintained. In addition, the majority of visitors (56.7 percent) felt that visitor facilities should exist outside of the historic site's boundaries. Respondents reported a preference for guided tours, as opposed to the option of receiving information from staff stationed in various parts of the historic structures and grounds.

The survey also sought to ascertain visitors' perception of the site's carrying capacity—that is, how many people can visit Weir Farm at any given time without making visitors feel that the site is crowded. Respondents answered that they felt no more than fifty visitors should be present on the site at any one time. This response will help site managers establish the site's carrying capacity in experiential terms.

### Water Quality Analysis

Area residents have reported that the size of the pond has decreased and its algal blooms have increased in magnitude (and odor) over the years. The NPS contracted with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bethel Field Office, Connecticut, to determine the condition of the pond and evaluate water quality on a parkwide basis (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1994).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service determined that the pond can be described as eutrophic.

This state may be more a function of water depth than elevated levels of nutrients, as the pond is a relatively shallow water body – seven feet at its deepest point. Water clarity ranges from four to five feet, with no evidence of planktonic algae bloom. Groundwater appears to contribute to the majority of the base flow of the pond.

If surrounding land use—unmanaged Weir Farm woodland and low density residential development—remains constant, the water quality will also remain constant. Water quality could also be maintained, or even improved, if nearby residential landowners adopt low maintenance landscape design principles and follow environmentally benign management practices for lawn and landscape maintenance.

### Weir Farm Traffic Counting Operations Report

Residents of the area use Nod Hill Road as a commuter route, and both park managers and neighbors want to ensure that Weir Farm visitors will not create traffic congestion. To determine the potential impact visitors will exert on traffic patterns, consultants measured current vehicular travel rates on Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane and calculated the percentage increase in traffic based on predicted visitation figures (Balloffet, 1995).

The study determined that, in the future, an average of 42 vehicles can be expected to enter and leave the park each day (84 total trips), which represents between 3 and 4 percent of total traffic. Some seasonal and day-of-week variation in Weir Farm traffic is expected: if twice as many vehicles visit the site on a Saturday during peak season, then Weir Farm traffic will be about 7 percent of total traffic on the local road system. Total Weir Farm traffic, estimated at 40,000 visitors per year, would thus constitute between 3 and 7 percent of the volume of total traffic. The study considered such increases in auto travel on Nod Hill Road to be minimal, and likely to not be noticeable to local commuter drivers.

### **Wetlands Assessment**

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service determined the location, extent, and drainage patterns of the site's wetlands (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1992). The assessment determined the site contains seven major wetland areas. Together, they occupy approximately one-third of the park's total acreage. The wetlands are the farm's most fragile ecological community and constrain the placement and methods of any construction on site.

### **White-Tailed Deer Issues and Concerns**

Vegetation at Weir Farm shows clear evidence of deer browse, and deer are seen every day in the fields near the Burlingham and main houses. Concerned about the changes in vegetation that result from browsing, North Atlantic Region staff conducted a preliminary investigation of the deer population at the site (NPS, 1992b).

The investigation revealed that deer have browsed moderately on area vegetation for about ten years and that deer population density in the area ranges from about 30 to 60 animals per square mile. The area's deer population is expected to increase, which will increase the level of browsing and change the character of vegetation further. The study recommended that, while removal of deer should not be summarily dismissed, the question should be approached from the perspective of vegetation management, not deer management. For example, vegetation along the perimeter of the park could be managed to control deer browse (e.g. by wrapping plants in burlap below the browse line and by placing wooden protective coverings over younger vegetation) helping to accomplish the planning team's objective to screen views to adjacent residences.

### *Weir Farm of the Future*

One of the few intact reminders of a milieu that no longer exists, Weir Farm offers the unparalleled opportunity to preserve and interpret a place central to the development of American Impressionism. Weir Farm has inspired artists for more than a century and continues to do so today. Very few public resources of this type exist.

In addition to the specific proposals outlined in the plan, site managers have adopted the following management objectives and long-term strategies for developing, managing, and interpreting Weir Farm and its resources.

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

*Objective: To implement effective resource management and land protection strategies that safeguard the site's cultural and natural resources, including its historic setting.*

#### **Landscape**

The Weir Farm landscape, like the site's structures and collections, is a primary cultural resource because it reflects changes J. Alden Weir and his children made and it is the subject of much of the art created at the farm. A program of routine and cyclic landscape preservation maintenance will protect surviving features of the site's historic landscape, such as the fields, hedgerows, gardens, pond, and pond plantings Weir created and installed while he lived at the farm. Site managers will monitor the condition of trees close to historic structures and, when needed, will prune them to minimize the threats they pose to these structures. The later changes to the landscape surrounding the Burlingham house will also be preserved; doing so will involve different management and treatment than required of the older landscapes Weir created.



## PART ONE: BACKGROUND

The first volume of the cultural landscape report has located evidence of landscape features from the years of Weir's occupancy that are no longer intact, and has produced a map of known painting sites. This information aided planners in siting the 15-car parking area and the proposed Burlingham complex septic system. No additional major alterations will be made to the landscape until the treatment plan, the final phase of this report, is completed.

With other agencies and trail management organizations, Weir Farm will develop and implement a trail management plan consistent with the cultural landscape report. This systematic approach to trail maintenance, restoration, and improvement, will aim to minimize the impact of walking trails on historic resources.

The site's wetlands have been included in a protected natural zone, an NPS designation that protects their ecological values by permitting only minimal human intrusion. The NPS will adhere to all local, state, and federal wetland protection regulations (for additional zoning information, see the "Management Zoning" section in Part One of this document).

Any construction planned near water resources must mitigate the possibility of erosion and subsequent siltation and sedimentation. New facilities will be designed to filter runoff so that any contaminants associated with the operation of these facilities will not affect the site's water resources.

In consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, *site managers will continue to monitor the quality of pond and stream water and will compile all data from previous testing to establish a baseline. Results will be available to the public and shared with other agencies.* With other agencies and adjacent landowners abutting the pond, the NPS will develop a management program for the pond and streams based on the results of the monitoring program that will outline all necessary repairs to the dam and assign priority to accomplishing these actions as funding becomes available.

The capacity and functioning of the site's three septic systems have been assessed. Two cesspools serve the Weir house. A 300-gallon stone-lined cesspool is located to the west of the house, which processes gray water from the kitchen and laundry. This system is working well and will not be upgraded. Bathroom waste is piped to a 1,500-gallon stone-lined cesspool located to the north of the main barn. This system has failed and is scheduled to be replaced by two 1,500-gallon holding tanks in 1995.

The Burlingham house is served by a 750-gallon brick-lined cesspool. This system is adequate for the present level of use. However, design work is under way to upgrade the system to accommodate living quarters for the artists-in-residence program. This work is scheduled to commence in 1995. The caretaker's house has a well-functioning cesspool with a leach field of unknown size and age. New septic systems will be carefully located to minimize alteration of the cultural landscape.

### **Habitat Preservation**

The NPS will collaborate with other public agencies, colleges and universities, and nonprofit conservation organizations to inventory and monitor the flora and fauna of the site. Existing habitats and threats to them will be identified and monitored. In consultation with these other organizations, site managers will develop natural resource management plans for the primary habitat areas of woodland, wetland, pond edge, and meadow that identify and set priorities for necessary actions.

Hunting and trapping will not be allowed on the site, but, as state and local regulations allow, visitors may fish in the pond.

### **Land Protection**

As currently configured, Weir Farm NHS encompasses approximately 60 of the 238 acres J. Alden Weir purchased between 1882 and 1907. The site is largely surrounded by homes on sparsely wooded lots. The

NPS will maintain recently acquired Lot 18 as open space to protect the historic character of Weir Farm.

Any acquisition of private property or interest in property will be accomplished through donation or on a willing-seller, willing-buyer basis. The intent of site managers is to acquire properties from owners who wish to sell, not to pressure landowners to sell their property unwillingly.

The NPS will work with other area landowners, such as the State of Connecticut and the Towns of Ridgefield and Wilton, to maintain existing walking trails and encourage development of new trails and promote preservation of adjacent open space.

The NPS will work cooperatively with park neighbors on the planting of screens of vegetation appropriate to Weir Farm. These screens will minimize the visual intrusion of contemporary development adjacent to the park and enhance the privacy of neighboring property owners. The NPS will also allow existing vegetation to mature along certain areas of the site's periphery. Site managers will conduct a comprehensive boundary survey and clearly mark all boundaries between Weir Farm and abutting property.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

Among their many other pursuits, J. Alden Weir, Mahonri Young, and Doris and Sperry Andrews have all been interested in the study of nature. Residents and visitors enjoyed bird-watching on the property and fished in the pond. These historical recreational activities will continue to be permitted and encouraged, as will a moderate level of cross-country skiing.

To reduce trail-use conflicts, motorized vehicles, bicycles, horses, and dogs will not be permitted within the national historic site, just as they are not permitted in the Weir-Leary-White Preserve. The use of motorized vehicles is prohibited on the adjacent Town of Ridgefield conservation land. To ensure that the peaceful quality of the site is maintained and its carry-

ing capacity not exceeded, site managers will monitor periodically the number of visitors using the trails and the site, in general.

### **Human Resources**

Weir Farm and Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, New Hampshire, are the only sites in the national park system that are primarily concerned with art. Staff for these sites require knowledge and skills in art history, art education, and exhibitions, a background not usually required at NPS sites.

Weir Farm will maintain a staff with a high degree of professionalism and with appropriate skills and expertise. This staff will help ensure that the site's preservation, collections, research, and interpretative requirements are met. Staff will be experienced specifically in managing and exhibiting art and other collections. In addition, a resident park ranger is needed to provide first-line response in the event of fire, vandalism, theft, or other emergency and to increase site security. (For a complete list of staffing requirements, see Appendix C.)

### **FACILITIES**

*Objective: To maintain the feeling and the historical, pastoral character of Weir Farm while providing safe, accessible facilities that support visitation levels appropriate to the site's intimate scale.*

#### **Design Criteria for the Development of New Facilities**

Any construction within the boundary of Weir Farm National Historic Site will meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, which guide preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction activities. While these standards are not intended to dictate design, they do require that the integrity and historical character of a property be retained. The *Standards for Rehabilitation* apply when changes to a historic property are needed to accommodate a contemporary use.

At Weir Farm, any contemplated new construction needs to be sensitive to issues of location, scale, and materials. Any new development will be sited in such a way as to avoid damage to historic features or sites and to avoid affecting views from the Weir complex, from the woodland surrounding the pond, and from significant fields, gardens, or other important landscape features. Careful consideration will also be given to the scale of proposed new construction. The materials and design of new elements will be compatible with the vernacular character of Weir Farm. For example, new plantings will avoid a formal, suburban appearance and will be compatible with existing vegetation on the site.

Siting new construction must also take into account the presence of site neighbors, significant archeological sites, and such environmental constraints as extensive wetlands and ledges.

### **Pedestrian Safety**

Touring the entire site will require crossing Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane. The NPS will work with the Towns of Wilton and Ridgefield to increase pedestrian safety by, for example, reducing the speed limit on Nod Hill Road, posting caution ('Pedestrian Crossing' and 'Go Slow') signs on Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane, installing a three-way stop sign at the intersection of these roads, and providing crosswalks. Two crosswalks—one on Nod Hill Road between the Burlingham house and the parking area, the other across Pelham Lane at its intersection with Nod Hill Road—are advised.

An off-road pedestrian path will be developed from the Burlingham house to the main house. Paths will be mown through the fields and vegetation along these paths will be cut often, both to minimize opportunities for Lyme disease infection and to protect the landscape generally from soil compaction and erosion. Off-trail travel will be discouraged for the same reasons. Trails will be maintained and surfaces improved as necessary to mitigate erosion.

### **Accessibility**

In accordance with federal law and NPS guidelines, site managers will make every reasonable effort to ensure that facilities and services at Weir Farm are accessible to and usable by all people, including those whose mobility is impaired. Special, separate, or alternative facilities, programs, or services will be provided only when existing ones cannot reasonably be made accessible. Weir Farm will consult with persons with such impairments or their representatives to determine what facilities and services are inaccessible and what must be done to make them accessible.

Measures to improve access to historic structures will be pursued only when they will not require the removal of historic fabric and will not adversely affect the significant qualities of the historic landscape.

Using the findings of the cultural landscape report, site managers will improve access to the grounds by analyzing and modifying trail surfaces. Trail maps designed so that persons with visual impairments can read them easily will identify surfaces, slopes, widths, distances between points of interest, and the location of potential barriers to enable users to decide whether to navigate the trail.

### **Parking**

Due to the site's scale, configuration, and geophysical features, the development of expansive on-site parking areas is not appropriate. Small "pods" of soft-surfaced, limited parking with extensive vegetative screening (like the 15-space parking area across from the Burlingham house) will be the prototypical parking style for the site.

Site managers will identify suitable locations within the nearby commercial district off Route 7 for off-site overflow parking during special events and peak visitation periods and will negotiate agreements with landowners for parking cars, tour buses, and recreational vehicles. Site managers will prohibit bus and RV idling beyond certain prescribed time limits to

minimize the impact of bus and RV parking.

Temporary signs will divert visitors to these lots when necessary.

Buses will not be permitted to park on the site at any time. They will, however, be able to drop passengers off at the site before they park in an overflow lot off-site. Site managers will evaluate the feasibility of establishing a shuttle service between the site, the overflow parking lot, and local train and bus stops.

### Road Character

The winding, narrow, rural character of Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane contributes to the aesthetic quality of the visitor's experience and also to the site's historic setting. The NPS will support efforts of Ridgefield and Wilton citizens to pass an ordinance designating Nod Hill Road and Pelham Lane as town "Scenic Roads." This designation will protect the roads' scenic and rural qualities by requiring formal review of all applications for alterations, such as road widening.

## COLLECTIONS

*Objective: To collect and exhibit art, realizing the unprecedented opportunity that exists at Weir Farm to reunite the historic property—domestic interiors, studios, and landscape—with the art it inspired.*

Interpreting the work of Weir and his colleagues at Weir Farm, as well as that of contemporary artists on the site, presents an opportunity to join art with the place that inspired its creation. The existing landscape permits visitors to see scenes depicted in the works of many noted American artists. Because a great number of these works are privately owned, they are potentially available to Weir Farm through direct donation or the donation of funds with which they might be purchased.

Museum collections will be acquired because of the critical role they play in helping visitors understand not

only the lives and creative vision of the artists associated with the site but also the value of the site itself. Collections will include works by J. Alden Weir and his Impressionist colleagues, Mahonri Young, Sperry Andrews, and other contemporary artists. They may also include furnishings used in the main house, the Weir studio, and the Young studio, as well as documents associated with these artists.

In 1993, Weir Farm developed a scope of collection statement (NPS, 1993) based on these principles, and staff will develop an acquisition plan in conjunction with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust to assign priority to the acquisition of certain works and to guide the Trust as it seeks donations or raises funds for purchases.

In addition to exhibitions of fine art at the visitor center (see "The Plan" in Part Two of this document), collections will be exhibited in the main house, the Weir studio, and the Young studio either as furnished rooms or arranged in formal exhibitions. Non-intrusive climate controls (see "Environmental Evaluation of Buildings at Weir Farm,") will protect paintings and other artifacts in these historic spaces.

Like collections at most NPS units, the Weir Farm collection may be larger than can be adequately exhibited at any one time. Certain archeological, archival, and other materials may never be exhibited. Museum-quality storage will be provided for those collections that are not on exhibit. Given the value of the collection, particularly of its works of art, it will be protected from theft, vandalism, fire, and other threats. In addition, the collection will be cataloged, documented, and fully researched.

Before works of art may be exhibited in Weir Farm's historic structures, staff must complete selected exhibit plans. A collection management plan and collection condition survey will be required to identify and assess the preservation and restoration needs of the collections in accordance with recommendations contained in the historic furnishings report.

## ARTISTIC ACTIVITY

*Objective: To perpetuate the site's long and unbroken artistic tradition by providing programs and facilities for ongoing artistic activity.*

### Artists-in-Residence

Since 1882, artists have lived at Weir Farm and have drawn inspiration from its landscape. The cornerstone of the Weir Farm Heritage Trust's programs, and central to Weir Farm as a national historic site, is the development of an artists-in-residence program that preserves and continues the tradition of creative response to the site. Providing the opportunity for serious artists to live and work at Weir Farm builds on its past, enriches the farm's artistic legacy, nurtures artists, and enhances the visitors' experience of this rare cultural resource.

The Trust has sponsored a visiting artist program at Weir Farm for three years (see "Existing Interpretation and Visitor Use" in Part Three of this document). In the future, up to twelve artists a year (three to five at a time) will be invited to live, work, and teach at the site. A panel of artists, art administrators, and art educators will choose artists for the program through a competitive process. Residencies will last, on average, one to two months, but they may be longer. As part of their participation in the program, artists will be encouraged to conduct painting demonstrations, open their studios, present illustrated talks, and offer other programs for the public. The Trust will establish and keep an ongoing written and photographic (and perhaps video) record of art created at the farm. When appropriate and possible, the Trust will acquire works by the participating artists for the site's collection.

Weir's descendants, who were instrumental in saving the farm and remain closely involved through the Weir Farm Heritage Trust, strongly support the artists-in-residence program in part because it perpetuates J. Alden Weir's lifelong commitment to teaching and nurturing other artists.

### Arts Education

A vital arts education program is another effective way of ensuring that the artistic tradition of Weir Farm survives. The existence of a large school enrollment in the surrounding area and the current need to supplement available arts education in primary and secondary schools throughout the nation position Weir Farm well to meet one of its most important objectives.

The art education program will be developed with an interdisciplinary approach that promotes using art to teach a variety of subjects, including history and geography. It will integrate the art and landscape of Weir Farm with the social histories of its occupants in an effort to explain how they lived on, used, and felt about the landscape. The program will emphasize both the practice and understanding of art.

The NPS will seek the cooperation of area schools and the Weir Farm Heritage Trust in developing and implementing this program. This program will be conducted through the combination of aggressive outreach activities in schools and such on-site activities as art workshops.

During the summer, when schools are not in session, some aspects of the program will be available to the general public. The NPS will seek the participation of other organizations to coordinate educational programs outside the school system.

### Special Exhibitions

An ongoing program of special exhibitions will supplement permanent exhibitions of art and furnishings and will flesh out the overall interpretive objectives of the site by focusing on different aspects of the farm's history. Special exhibitions will also continue the site's artistic tradition by featuring contemporary art created at Weir Farm. These short-term exhibitions will draw from site and other collections to explore the works of Weir, his contemporaries, Young, Andrews, and other contemporary artists, particularly those in the visiting artist and artists-in-residence programs.

Temporary exhibitions will be installed both on the site and at interested museums in the area. The NPS will work with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust and other museum organizations interested in supporting such a cooperative venture.

### Other Programs

Lecture series held both on and off the site will present topics associated with the farm's history, art history, or contemporary art, or they will be tied specifically to other activities occurring at the site. Similarly, NPS partners, including the Trust, will from time to time offer guided walks and other activities appropriate to the site's objectives.

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE

*Objective: To provide a diverse visitor experience that encourages enjoyment of the natural beauty of the site and that promotes understanding of the farm's role in American Impressionism and its continuous use by artists from 1882 to the present.*

Visitors to historic sites generally arrive with some expectations and preconceptions. Their encounter with tangible resources and information may satisfy, augment, alter, or frustrate these notions. "Visitor experience" is the term used to indicate the combination of these factors with certain ancillary features, such as the adequacy of parking, the legibility of signs and brochures, and the clarity of directions to the site. Visitors to Weir Farm should appreciate the site as a home, a workplace, and a source of artistic inspiration. They should also understand why the idea of a farm, and the site itself, appealed to Weir and what farm life signified to him and his contemporaries.

Interpretation will be presented in both static (such as brochures and signs) and interactive ways (such as guided tours and videodisc) to build on visitors' orientation to the site. Visitors will encounter historic structures (due to building code requirements, the public will be permitted to tour only the first floor of

the main house), historic and contemporary works of art, and the landscape that inspired these works. In this way, they will be directly encouraged to contemplate the vision and method of these artists, the significance of American Impressionism, in general, and in this key setting, and the relationship between landscape and art.

### TRANSPORTATION

*Objective: To promote train, bus, pedestrian, and bicycle travel to the site in order to encourage resource conservation and reduce pollution and traffic congestion.*

In the 1930s, the Connecticut Department of Transportation began planning for a Route 7 bypass, commonly referred to as "Super 7," that would have passed approximately 1,000 feet from the eastern boundary of the national historic site. The Department of Transportation has since removed "Super 7" from the state's 10-year master plan, but the NPS has serious concerns about the bypass should efforts to build it be revived in the future. In that event, the NPS will pursue measures to mitigate its impact on the site, such as the installation of sound barriers, vegetative screening, or dedicated greenspace buffers, aligning the road on the far side of the right-of-way from the site, and improving access to the site by means of Route 102. The NPS will also promote access by foot and bicycle by improving bike and pedestrian ways to Weir Farm.

Through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the NPS will work on transportation planning with the Towns of Wilton and Ridgefield, regional planning agencies, and the State of Connecticut to improve access to Weir Farm from the Branchville train station and other mass transit routes by shuttle (using alternative-fuel vehicles as possible) and bicycle and pedestrian pathways. The NPS will also work with these agencies to identify the best routes for visitors to take to the site and to design and install directional signs along these routes.

## PART ONE: BACKGROUND

Park brochures will include train and bus information to encourage visitors to take public transportation to the site. Directions to the site and park information will be available at the Branchville, Norwalk, and Westport train stations, as well as at other appropriate train and bus stations.

The NPS will support the development of safe bikeways in the area and will provide bike racks and other amenities for bicyclists at the site. Bicycle riding is prohibited on all trails within the adjacent Nature Conservancy property, the Weir-Leary-White Preserve, and on most of the trails within the adjacent Town of Ridgefield conservation land. Within Weir Farm, bicycle riding will also be prohibited to avoid resource degradation and use conflicts on the site's narrow trails.

### PARTNERSHIPS

*Objective: To continue to work in close partnership with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust and others to establish an art collection and to support park activities, including implementing the plan.*

#### **Weir Farm Heritage Trust**

At Weir Farm, the primary partnership for planning and programs is between the NPS and the private, nonprofit Weir Farm Heritage Trust. Weir Farm's enabling legislation refers specifically to the Trust as a potential cooperator, and this relationship, formalized in a cooperative agreement between the two organizations, is expected to be a long-term affiliation.

Since the beginning of NPS operations in 1992, the Trust has provided art and education programs, with particular emphasis on planning and developing an artists-in-residence program. It offers art workshops, special art exhibitions, lecture series, and other programs. The Trust has also begun to establish an art collection for the site. Finally, the Trust conducts sales at the site and is expected to continue to serve as the cooperating sales association for Weir Farm.

The Trust follows site issues and outside activities that threaten the long-term preservation of site resources. In addition, the Trust provides advocacy for the historic site as needed and works to build community support for the park through its membership program.

#### **Other Partnerships**

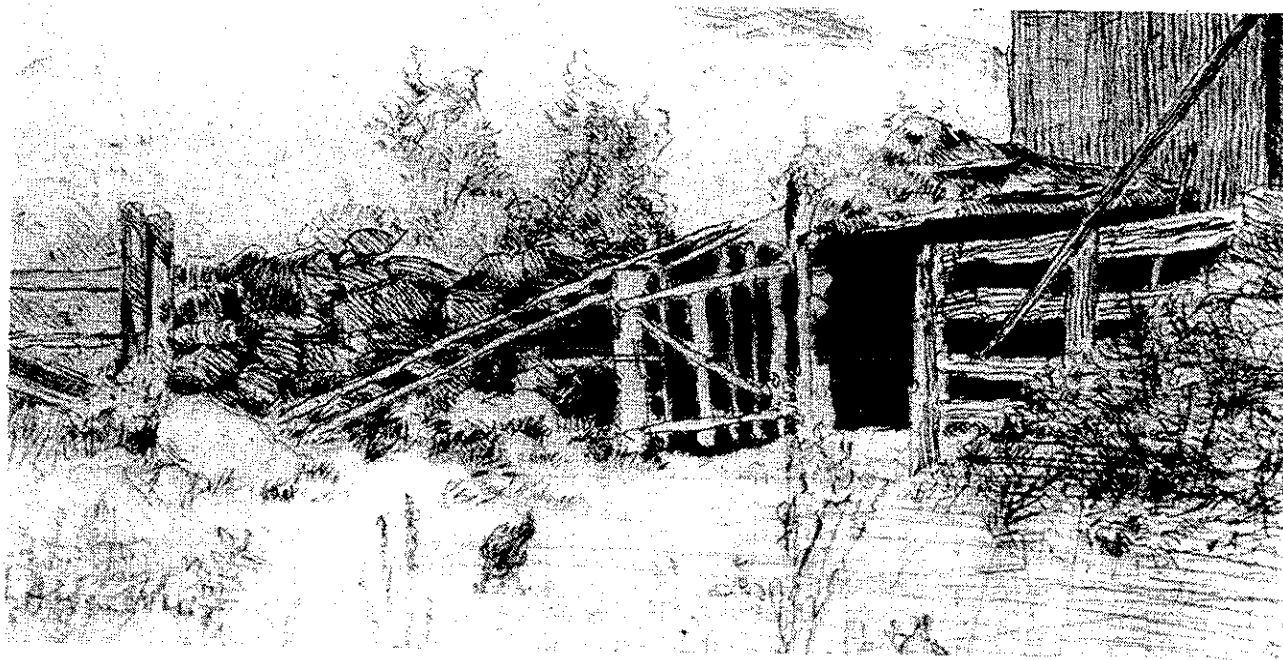
Because Weir Farm and the Weir-Leary-White Preserve share a common audience (one property is the physical extension of the other) and some of the same management concerns, the site anticipates forming a partnership with the preserve. The preserve borders the southwest corner of the site, and 37 of its 113 acres were historically part of Weir Farm. In the future, the historic site and the preserve may cooperate on special programs and share or exchange maintenance responsibility for such resources as trails and signs.

A similar geographic relationship exists with the Town of Ridgefield, which owns approximately 33 acres on the northeast border of Weir Farm. The site and the Town may cooperate on visitor programs, trail management, and other efforts.

Other cooperative efforts with local organizations exist to accomplish specific programs or projects. Area garden clubs are helping to rehabilitate historic gardens, and organizations such as the Junior League of Stamford/Norwalk have assisted in developing volunteer programs for the site. The museums and historic sites in Connecticut that share a focus on American Impressionism—the Bush-Holley House Museum (Cos Cob), the Florence Griswold Museum (Old Lyme), the Lyman Allyn Art Museum (New London), the William Benton Museum of Art (University of Connecticut, Storrs), the Wadsworth Atheneum (Hartford), the New Britain Museum of American Art, and the Mattatuck Museum (Waterbury)—are also potential partners for such programs as staff training and recruitment, new employee and volunteer orientation, interpretive programs, curriculum development, and symposia, lectures, and seminars relating to Weir and American Impressionism.



PART TWO: THE PLAN  
AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED



J. ALDEN WEIR, *The Webb Farm*, NOT DATED, ETCHING, 2 1/2 X 5 5/16 IN.

WEIR FARM HERITAGE TRUST

\*  
PART TWO: THE PLAN  
AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

### *Modifications Made to the Preferred Alternative to Form the Final Plan*

This document outlines a proposal or "the plan" (a modification of Alternative 1, the National Park Service's preferred alternative in the draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement) and two other alternatives for the management, development, and use of Weir Farm National Historic Site. Each option presented fulfills the site's purpose as outlined in its enabling legislation and provides for both the preservation of its resources and its safe and effective operation.

The plan and the alternatives differ in the conceptual framework that guides each management approach. The plan focuses on reuniting the historic property—presented as it appeared historically—with the art it inspired. Alternative 2 focuses on preserving the farm's artistic heritage without restoring structures and landscapes to their appearance during the time Weir and Young lived and worked on the farm, and thus without making a direct connection between art and the landscape. Alternative 3 focuses on taking only those actions necessary for preserving the farm and offers very limited site interpretation and programs.

The plan presented in this document is largely similar to Alternative 1, the preferred alternative as outlined in the draft plan/statement. The modifications made are a result of information received during the public review period and of further analysis. The substantive changes are outlined below.

- 1) Due to public suggestions, the plan includes recommendations that place greater emphasis on the interpretation of Doris and Sperry Andrews as preservationists and artists. The main house will be interpreted to reflect its continuous use by the Weir, Young, and Andrews families. Interpretive exhibits focusing on Mr. and Mrs. Andrews will be placed in both the visitor center and in the Young Studio.

- 2) The preferred alternative included recommendations to redevelop parcels adjacent to or near the park for a visitor center and administration and maintenance facility. Since the draft plan was published, a development feasibility study for the location of such facilities was completed. This study indicates that properties between Nod Hill Road, Old Branchville Road, and Route 7 (northeast of the park) have the greatest potential for redevelopment for park purposes.

The plan includes recommendations for acquisition and redevelopment of properties near—not directly adjacent to—the park and indicates that parcels in Ridgefield—the Goldsmith, DiNapoli, and Meines properties—would be appropriate for these uses. Facilities located on these properties would allow visitors to walk, off-road, on upgraded existing woodland trails to visit the pond, main house, and park resources. A shuttle service (approximately a three-minute ride) would be necessary for those visitors who choose not to walk three quarters of a mile to the main house.

- 3) Several people commented on the cost estimates for implementing the preferred alternative and suggested that the NPS consider other options for revenue generation. As a result of these comments, the final plan includes recommendations for site managers to pursue fee area designation to allow revenue to be generated from charges for special programs, tours and general admission. Although fees may help offset costs for park operations, fees will not be relied upon for major revenue generation. In addition, the plan includes recommendations for the NPS to work closely with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust to pursue alternative funding sources for plan implementation, such as corporate, foundation, and private support. Finally, staffing projections have been decreased to lower operational costs and to reflect the ongoing NPS "streamlining" effort.

- 4) After the draft plan was published, Congress enacted legislation authorizing the inclusion of Lot 18 in Wilton and its associated unbuilt road within the park's boundaries. Therefore, all discussions regarding the proposed inclusion of Lot 18 within the park's boundaries have been deleted from this document.

### *The Plan: Weir Farm as the Marriage of Landscape and Art*

#### CONCEPT

Awareness of our nation's artistic heritage and its relationship to the American landscape converge at Weir Farm. The plan emphasizes the relationship of art to landscape in two ways, 1) by reuniting works of art with the landscapes that inspired them and 2) by presenting the farm's buildings and landscape to the visitor as they appeared to their historic occupants.

Unlike conventional museums, where visitors see only the creative products of artists' lives, Weir Farm provides the opportunity to acquaint them with the domestic, personal, and creative dimensions of the lives of Weir and his successors. Domestic interiors will be furnished and gardens, farm fields, and other landscape features will be rehabilitated to appear as they did to the farm's historic figures and their guests.

Ample facilities are required for visitor services, administration, and maintenance; art and artifact collections need museum-quality exhibition and storage conditions. However, building new facilities on the site would be inconsistent with the preservation and historic presentation of this landscape, and artifacts cannot be stored or displayed in the site's historic farm structures without significantly altering them and threatening their long-term survival. Thus, in the plan, an existing structure or structures north of the national historic site will be acquired and rehabilitated for use as a visitor center. The center will be designed for art exhibition according to the most current museum standards. By rehabilitating nearby structures located on properties that were not part of the historic farm, the site's landscape can be returned to its historic appearance, and adequate space will exist nearby to operate the site properly and effectively.

## PART TWO: THE PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Future visitors will encounter restored buildings and landscapes based on documentation from the Weir and Young periods. To familiarize visitors with the significance and career of the artists who have lived and worked at Weir Farm, exhibitions, audiovisual presentations, and other media will initially orient them to the site at the visitor center. Because of the connection between art and the landscape, the visitor center should be as close as possible to the site so that visitors can return easily after site tours to look at paintings and other interpretive materials in a more informed and comprehensive way. Thus, although the visitor center will introduce site resources, it will also exhibit works of art tied in varying degrees to the immediate landscape. Exhibits at the visitor center will also address the grass-roots efforts, spearheaded by Cora Weir Burlingham, Doris and Sperry Andrews, and others, that led to the preservation of the farm.

Guided tours of the house and studios will be a major focus of the site's interpretive program. Tours will be scheduled at regular intervals according to group size and frequency. Visitors will be encouraged to walk the grounds while they wait for a guided tour.

In terms of the impact on both resources and a visitor's experience, carrying capacity is a more critical consideration in the structures than on the grounds. No more than ten people per tour is advised to protect the structures and their contents and provide a quality visitor experience; a majority of the visitors polled in the visitor use survey conducted in 1993-94 indicated that groups touring the main house and studios should not be larger.

Because it is the structure on the site that is most closely associated with J. Alden Weir, the Weir studio will be furnished to interpret his use of the structure (see preliminary rendering of the interior of the historic Weir studio). Occupied by Weir, by Dorothy and Mahonri Young, and later by Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, the main house will be furnished as much as possible

and interpreted to reflect continuous use by the Weir, Young, and Andrews families. The Young studio will be furnished to interpret Young's use of the structure and will house exhibits on Sperry Andrews.

Although outbuildings and landscapes are usually interpreted in wayside signs and exhibits, such features may constitute an intrusion upon the historical scene of Weir Farm. Instead, an interpretive brochure, including trail information, will be available to visitors. A separate guide to historic painting sites will continue to be part of the interpretive offerings.

### WEIR COMPLEX

#### Landscape

The landscape surrounding the Weir complex will be restored to its appearance in about 1940, to reflect the continuous use of the site while conveying the historic character of the landscape that prevailed through both the Weir and Young periods. By that time, all the major buildings and other features of the landscape that survive today were present; the Youngs were still actively farming the property and the landscape retained the open character that defined it during the Weir's time. Many of the landscape features Weir created, including most of the fields, orchards, and gardens, were retained when the Youngs alone occupied the farm. Features of the historic landscape that the Weirs and the Youngs created but that no longer exist will be replaced if documentation is sufficient to guide this replacement. Plans are under way to restore the garden north of the Weir studio, or the "secret garden." Other landscape features, such as the wagon shed, which came down sometime after 1960, will be reconstructed and interpreted. The structure could be used, if suitable, for much-needed storage. The landscape restoration work will be guided by the second volume of the cultural landscape report.

Overgrown fields will be cleared and their specimen trees protected. Priority will be assigned to restoring those areas that contain the largest concentrations of documented painting sites. Should historical evidence

be insufficient to support an accurate restoration of any given landscape or landscape feature, the area will be preserved rather than restored.

### Structures

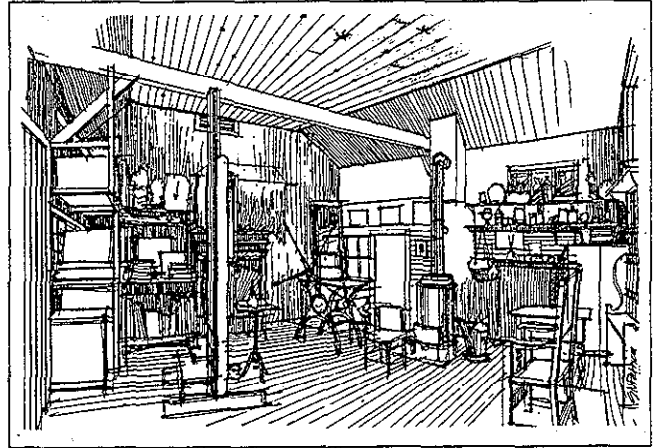
The exteriors of the structures within the Weir complex will be restored to their appearance in about 1940 and interpreted, like the landscape, to reflect their continuous use by Weir and his successors. The historic structure report will guide the restoration of building facades. In some cases, historic features that are missing from the facades may be replaced, based on documentation in the historic structure report.

The barn will be restored and will be interpreted to reflect the Weir and Young era farming practices, which were discontinued by the Andrews family.

### Collections

The interiors of the main house, the Weir studio, and the Young studio will be furnished as much as possible. The historic furnishings report, and the availability of objects and furnishings, will guide the selection and placement of furnishings in these structures; some objects, including horse tack and agricultural equipment, may be exhibited in the main barn. To the greatest extent possible, objects will appear where they did historically.

To protect the collection, the environmental conditions of the main house and the studios will be stabilized by non-intrusive means (see "Environmental Evaluation of Buildings at Weir Farm" in Part One of this document) but no work of art will be exhibited in these historic structures if its condition or composition makes it vulnerable in such settings. Moreover, because of the need to protect the collections from the potential hazards of environmental conditions and public access, the structures will house fewer artworks than they would have historically.



INTERIOR OF HISTORIC WEIR STUDIO

## BURLINGHAM COMPLEX

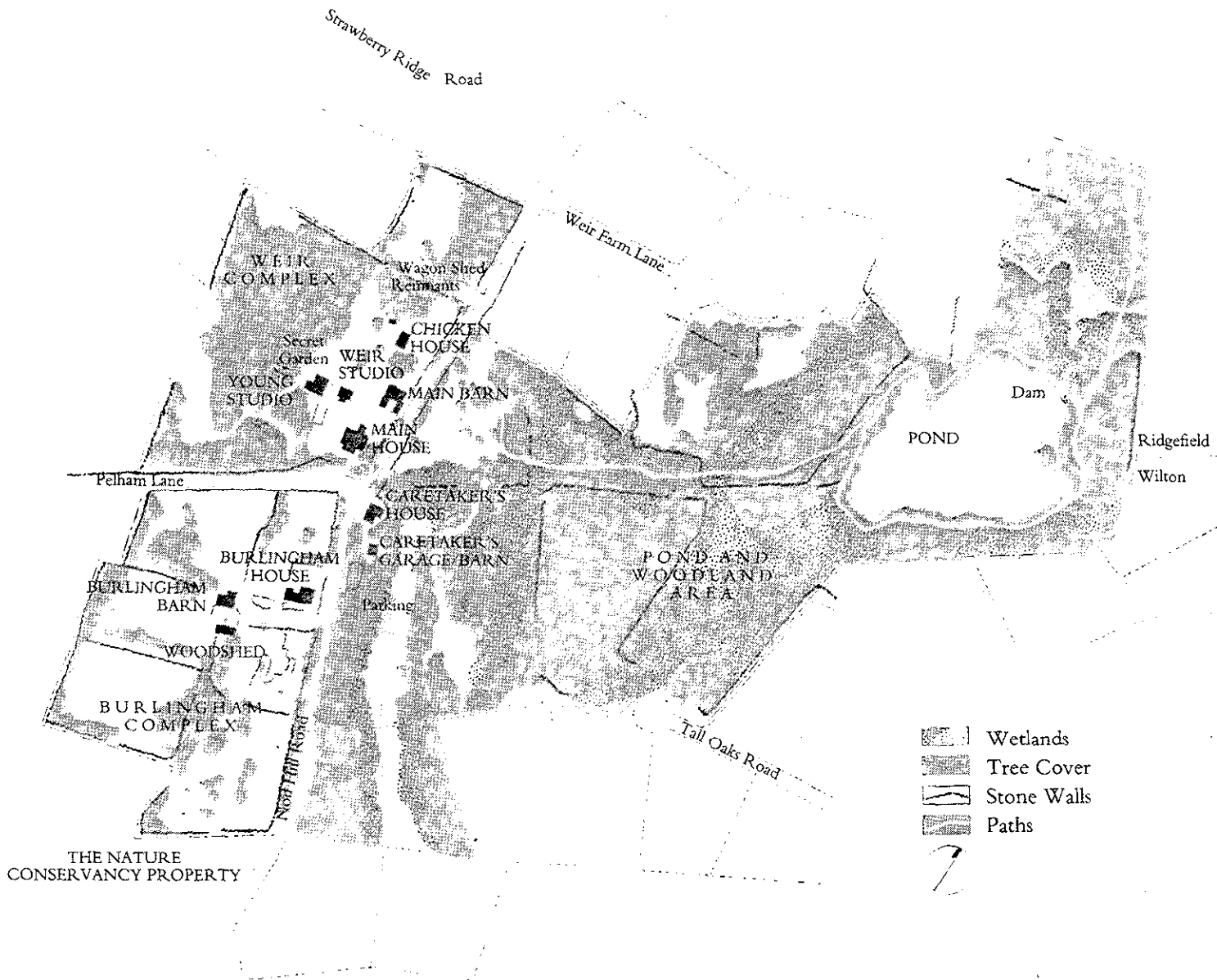
### Landscape

Landscapes at the Burlingham complex will be rehabilitated rather than restored so that the changes Cora Weir Burlingham made after 1940 are retained. A cyclical preservation and maintenance program will focus on overcoming the deteriorated condition of many portions of these grounds. Mowing regularly and pruning woody vegetation will reclaim existing but overgrown fields, and site managers will evaluate the possibility of rehabilitating Cora Weir Burlingham's gardens.

### Structures

The Burlingham house and the Burlingham barn will be rehabilitated, the dwelling to house artists in the artists-in-residence program and the barn to provide year-round space for school and other programs. The woodshed and tool house in this complex will be preserved and used for storage.

## THE PLAN



*Works of art inspired by the site exhibited in a visitor center located in rehabilitated structure near the site. Visitor center also features site orientation, interpretive materials and exhibits, some offices, collections management area, and library.*

*Weir complex structures and landscape restored to their historic appearance and interpreted.*

*Artistic tradition of the site kept alive through artists-in-residence and school programs.*

*Administration/maintenance facility located within a one-mile radius of the site.*

*Peak visitation, special event, bus and large vehicle parking located off-site in a commercial district.*

*Nearby properties acquired for visitor center and administration/maintenance facility.*

## POND AND WOODLAND AREA

### Landscape

Based on the treatment plan in the cultural landscape report, site staff will clear limited areas of the woodland east of Nod Hill Road to recreate the open appearance of this area circa 1940. The boundaries of the site will be left wooded. Additional vegetation may be planted to screen views of contemporary development.

Consistent with the treatment of the Weir complex landscape, missing historic features in this area will be replaced if sufficient information exists to do so. If information needed to support an accurate landscape treatment is lacking, landscapes surrounding the pond and woodland area will be preserved rather than restored.

The present system of pedestrian paths will be expanded to create a loop that links the Weir complex, the Burlingham complex, the pond and woodland area, and adjacent open space. Historic routes, such as the wagon road, will form the basis of this circulation system. As funding and resources allow, new connectors will be developed in accordance with the recommendations of the cultural landscape report and in consultation with the managers of adjacent parcels of open space.

### Structures

The caretaker's house will be rehabilitated to provide housing for an on-site park ranger. The caretaker's garage/barn will be rehabilitated and enlarged, by building a compatible new addition following the footprint of the missing section, to create studio space for the artists-in-residence program.

## NEW FACILITIES

To retain the farm's peaceful environment and to keep the historic landscape free of modern development, on-site construction will be kept to a minimum. A visitor center and an administration and maintenance facility will be developed at off-site locations, preferably in rehabilitated structures north of the park. Extreme care will be taken to minimize the impact of the new facilities on abutting properties by siting them carefully and possibly by installing sound barriers and vegetative screens.

### Visitor Center

The visitor center will include space for reception, rest rooms, orientation, interpreters' offices, and sales. It will also feature 1) exhibitions and other interpretive media about Weir, his colleagues, and his successors at the site, as well as about the site's history; 2) a permanent exhibition of site-related art, primarily by Weir and his colleagues, Young, and Andrews; 3) temporary exhibitions that illuminate site themes; and, 4) exhibits on the grass-roots efforts, spearheaded by Cora Weir Burlingham, Doris and Sperry Andrews, and others, that led to the preservation of Weir Farm. Finally, the center will incorporate a museum-quality collections care and storage area, curatorial offices, and a library. To accommodate these functions, the structure is estimated to require 8,000 to 9,000 square feet of space. Limited parking (for approximately 25 cars) will be provided for visitors at this location.

Because the visitor center will not be directly adjacent to the park, a shuttle service will be necessary to transport visitors. A shuttle drop-off will be located either to the north of the chicken house or in the new 15-car parking lot located across from the Burlingham house.

### Park Administration and Maintenance

Another property north of the current park boundaries will be used to support offices for administrative and maintenance staff, office equipment, a carpentry shop, a painting shop, and equipment repair. To accommo-



\*  
PART TWO: THE PLAN  
AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

## **BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND LAND PROTECTION**

### **Vegetative Screening**

Twenty-four residential properties surround the park and, except for three parcels, were once part of Weir's historic farm. These properties have been developed, some in ways that intrude visually on the historic character of Weir Farm.

The NPS seeks to work cooperatively with the owners of the adjacent properties to plant vegetation along the periphery of the park. Additional plantings would screen views of contemporary development from key park sites, such as the wagon road and the pond, as well as enhance the privacy of park neighbors. The NPS will also work with property owners within the pond's watershed to help maintain and upgrade water quality within the pond.

### **Boundary Adjustments**

Additional properties will be acquired for the visitor center and the administration and maintenance facility. *Criteria for acquiring these properties will include, but will not be limited to, adequate access, proximity to resources, appropriate topography, absence of wetlands, adequate lot size and configuration, least impact on neighbors, and the presence of appropriate existing structures for redevelopment.*

Properties between Nod Hill Road, Old Branchville Road, and Route 7 (northeast of the park) have the greatest potential for redevelopment for park purposes. The Goldsmith, DiNapoli, and Meines properties have been evaluated for development of such facilities and have been determined to be appropriate for these uses. Because these properties are bordered on two sides by open space, park development here would have minimal impact on neighbors. Park traffic could be diverted off Old Branchville Road, never reaching Nod Hill Road and thereby posing minimal impact on the Nod Hill, Strawberry Ridge, Weir Farm Lane, Pelham Lane, and Tall Oaks Road neighborhoods. In addition, facilities located on these properties would

allow visitors to walk, off-road, on existing woodland trails to visit the pond, main house, and park resources. Acquisition of easements or rights-of-way over State of Connecticut and Town of Ridgefield properties would be necessary to allow for pedestrian/visitor access to the park. A shuttle service (approximately a three-minute ride) would also be necessary for those visitors who choose not to take the three-quarter-of-a-mile-trail to the main house. This shuttle service could also pick up passengers at the train station, the overflow lot, and at other locations deemed appropriate.

The NPS (and/or the Weir Farm Heritage Trust) will acquire additional properties and interests in properties through donation or on a willing-seller, willing-buyer basis. If structures that can be rehabilitated for the identified purposes become available, new construction may not be necessary. Congressional legislation will be required to authorize NPS acquisition of properties. Without legislation, the park could make only minor adjustments to its boundaries.

### **Overflow Parking**

The NPS will pursue cooperative agreements with the Towns of Wilton and/or Ridgefield or with private property owners for use of a parking lot (in the commercial district) to accommodate overflow parking.

## **PROGRAMS**

### **Artists-in-Residence**

Maintaining a vital artistic tradition at the site is a priority for Weir Farm managers. The plan calls for full development of an artists-in-residence program. Artists will be provided with both housing and studio space at the site; they will live in the Burlingham house, already designed for domestic use, and work in the rehabilitated and expanded caretaker's garage/barn. The kitchen and bathrooms of the Burlingham house will require complete rehabilitation.

The artists-in-residence program does not preclude other artists from using the farm. Artists will be allowed to visit and use the site whenever it is open.

### Arts Education

Arts education is also central to this alternative and, like the artists-in-residence program, will ensure ongoing artistic activity at the site. The arts education program combines outreach in the schools with on-site programs, including workshops in the Burlingham barn. This barn will thus require rehabilitation for year-round use. School programming will also make use of the site facilities open to all visitors, including the historic house and studios, the visitor orientation and gallery spaces, and the landscape.

### Special Exhibitions

In addition to permanent and temporary exhibitions at the visitor center, special exhibitions arranged in cooperation with other museums will also be promoted.

### Other Programs

Special programs that require an indoor facility, including lectures or workshops, will be conducted off-site or in the Burlingham barn when it is not being used for arts education programs.

### ESTIMATED COSTS TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

Estimates for one-time capital costs for development of facilities and preservation of historic resources is approximately \$11 million. Annual operation and maintenance costs are estimated to be \$850,000. Additional costs for art acquisition, which cannot be conducted with federal dollars, and for land acquisition will also be incurred (see Appendix C).

To help defray federal expenditures, site managers will work with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust and other partners to pursue alternative avenues for funding, such as corporate, foundation, and private support. Various partnership efforts will be explored to leverage federal dollars, such as generating private funding for land acquisition and facility construction. In addition, site managers will evaluate the potential for generating some operating revenue from charging fees. Although

fees may help offset costs for park operations, fees will not be relied upon for major revenue generation.

## *Alternative 2: Weir Farm as a Work of Art*

### CONCEPT

In this alternative, Weir Farm would have been treated as a "work of art" in itself. Artists at the planning team's workshop suggested that the farm be stabilized, conserved, and presented to the viewing public as "a unique collection, accretion, and accomplishment of American artists." This alternative was designed not to crop and highlight the picture, but to take the site as it is and illuminate it through interpretation. The changes made to the farm throughout the tenures of the Weir, Young, and Andrews families would have been retained. The current appearance of the site would not have been altered: the evolution of the landscape from open farm field to forest would have been preserved and structures would have remained as they are to enhance visitors' appreciation of the site's continuous use since 1882.

The opportunity to view works of art inspired by the farm was just as important to the visitor experience in this alternative as in the plan. But because the site would have retained its contemporary appearance, the actual connection of the works with the land would not have been as visible and therefore not as critical to the interpretive plan. In this alternative, art exhibitions and other visitor services would have occurred off-site, and visitors would have been shuttled to the farm.

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE

In this alternative, visitors would have parked and been greeted at an off-site visitor center within a three-mile radius of the site. There they would have received much the same orientation described in the plan, except the narrative would have focused less on the theme of the site's continuous use, because that concept would have been more directly observable on the

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PART TWO: THE PLAN  
AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

site itself than in the plan. Thorough orientation at the visitor center would have been more critical in this alternative than in the plan because visitors would have had limited access to orientation materials once at the site.

The number of visitors on the site would have been controlled through the shuttle system. From the on-site shuttle stop north of the chicken house, visitors would have walked to a visitor station in the main barn to gather for guided tours of the main house and studios. As in the plan, these tours would have been a major focus of the site's interpretive program, would have been scheduled at whatever regular intervals demanded and frequency suggested and would have included no more than ten persons. Visitors would have been encouraged to walk the grounds while waiting for guided tours. A brochure that illustrated the areas of the farm most often painted would have also been offered.

Interpretation at the Weir studio would have focused on Weir's, Dorothy Weir Young's and Sperry Andrews' use of the structure. Interpretation of the main house would have focused on the lifestyles of all three families who lived in it. Interpretation of the Young studio would have focused on Mahonri Young's and Sperry Andrews' use of the structure.

## **WEIR COMPLEX**

### **Landscape**

The existing character of the landscape in the Weir complex would have been preserved. A preservation maintenance program would have retained and cared for existing landscape features. Existing fields would have been mowed yearly to discourage vegetative succession and to preserve the existing woodlands (that were farm fields prior to the 1950s). Horticulturally significant shrubs near the Weir complex structures would have been pruned as needed to ensure or revive their health and vigor. If severely deteriorated, historic plant material would have been removed and replaced

in kind. Severely deteriorated historic plant material would also have been propagated on site.

Existing remnants of deteriorated or lost landscape features would have been retained. The current project to restore the "secret garden" and provide limited replacement of missing plantings and features would have continued, but no more garden restoration projects would have been initiated. In this alternative, no attempts would have been made to replace missing landscape features.

To accommodate the shuttle service from the visitor center, a turn-around where the shuttle could drop off and pick up passengers would have been developed north of the chicken house. An off-road pedestrian path would have been developed from the drop-off to the visitor station in the main barn.

### **Structures**

The structures within the Weir complex would have been preserved as they are, not restored. A portion of the main barn would have been rehabilitated for an on-site visitor station; rest rooms would have been added in the barn. All building exteriors would have been repaired and stabilized to preserve their current appearance. Deteriorated exterior elements would have been replaced in-kind as necessary.

### **Collections**

Art equipment and studio furnishings associated with J. Alden Weir, Dorothy Weir Young, and Sperry Andrews would have been exhibited, to the greatest extent possible, in the Weir studio. Because of environmental constraints, the need to protect the collections, and the hazard posed by visitor traffic, the studio would have housed far fewer objects than at present. Similarly, the Young studio would have exhibited selected works and furnishings associated with Young and Andrews according to their environmental vulnerability and their capacity to represent the continuous use of this studio and would have housed far fewer objects than at present. The historic furnishings report

would have guided the placement of furnishings and works of art in these studios and in the house.

To protect the collection, the environmental conditions within the main house and the studios would have been stabilized by non-intrusive means (see "Environmental Evaluation of Buildings at Weir Farm," in Part One of this document). These structures would have housed fewer objects than they do currently. Some objects, including horse tack and agricultural equipment, could have been exhibited in a portion of the main barn.

## **BURLINGHAM COMPLEX**

### **Landscape**

As within the Weir complex, the landscape at the Burlingham complex would have been preserved as it exists at present, and a preservation maintenance program would have retained and cared for existing landscape features. No garden rehabilitation would have been pursued.

### **Structures**

The structures within the Burlingham complex would have been rehabilitated for contemporary uses. All of the building exteriors would have been repaired and stabilized to preserve their present appearance.

A limited number of offices and a small archival space would have been created in the Burlingham house. Three studios for the artists-in-residence program would have been created in the Burlingham barn, which would have been rehabilitated to improve its *climatic controls and lighting and to provide running water.*

## **POND AND WOODLAND AREA**

### **Landscape**

The landscape in the pond and woodland area would have been preserved as it exists at present. A preservation maintenance program would have retained and cared for existing landscape features. The existing trail system would have been clearly marked and mapped.

### **Structures**

The caretaker's house would have been rehabilitated to provide housing for an on-site park ranger. The caretaker's garage/barn would have been rehabilitated to store maintenance equipment and supplies. All building exteriors would have been repaired and stabilized to preserve their present appearance.

## **NEW FACILITIES**

Visitor services not easily housed in the existing historic farm structures would have been provided at a remote location, outside of the existing site boundaries. The site's administrative and maintenance functions would have been housed in a new facility that would have been built at the eastern end of Weir Farm Lane.

### **Visitor Center**

An off-site structure would have been rehabilitated for a visitor center. This center would have included space for reception, orientation, rest rooms, interpreters' offices, and sales. It would have also featured 1) exhibits and other interpretive media about Weir, his colleagues, and his successors at the site, as well as about the site's history; 2) a permanent exhibit of site-related art, primarily by Weir and his colleagues, Young, and Andrews; 3) temporary exhibits of works from the collection; and 4) exhibits on the grass-roots efforts, spearheaded by Cora Weir Burlingham, Doris and Sperry Andrews, and others, that led to the preservation of Weir Farm. The visitor center would have incorporated a museum-quality space for collections care and storage, curatorial offices, and a library. Most administrative offices would have been located here, while a few would have been on the site in the Burlingham house. Finally, the center would have provided space for lectures, art classes, and other special programs.

These functions were estimated to need between 10,000 and 12,000 square feet of space. This estimated spacial requirement was larger than that estimated for the visitor center in the plan (8,000 to 9,000 square feet). In the plan, the visitor center's proximity to the

\*  
**PART TWO: THE PLAN  
AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

park and surrounding residences restricts its scale. Such constraints were absent in this alternative. If acquisition of such a facility was not feasible, the NPS would have considered leasing a facility for the visitor center.

Near the center, parking would have been provided for cars, buses, and recreational vehicles. A frequent shuttle service would have operated between the site and the visitor center. The shuttle would have also stopped at local train and bus stations and at other locations (as determined through consultation with local groups) during scheduled arrivals and departures.

#### **Park Administration and Maintenance**

A new administration and maintenance facility would have been developed at the end of Weir Farm Lane to include space for offices, office equipment, a carpentry shop, a painting shop, and equipment repair. To accommodate these functions, the structure would have required approximately 4,500 square feet of interior space and 1,000 square feet of unheated space. In addition, limited parking (10 to 15 cars) for staff would have been provided at this location. The facility and its parking area would have been built into the existing slope to minimize its visual impact on the abutting properties and on the trail to the pond. The building and parking would have been screened with native shrubs and evergreens.

#### **BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND LAND PROTECTION**

##### **Vegetative Screening**

In Alternative 2, as in the plan, the NPS would have worked with adjacent landowners to plant vegetative screening along the periphery of the park to enhance the privacy of park neighbors and screen views of residential development from the park. The NPS would also have worked with property owners within the pond's watershed to help maintain and upgrade water quality within the pond.

#### **Boundary Adjustments**

In Alternative 2, properties for the visitor center, within three miles of the site, would have been acquired. The parcel would have offered adequate interior space to accommodate the functions earlier described for the center with a minimum of new construction. The NPS hoped to locate an existing building with the required 10,000 to 12,000 square feet of space and an interior configuration that would have permitted maximum flexibility for developing floor plans. The appropriate location would have also offered adequate space for visitor and staff parking. The NPS had identified several parcels as possibilities for remote off-site development. One was the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Company site in the village of Georgetown in the southwestern corner of the town of Redding. A former industrial site proposed for redevelopment, the site is approximately 2.7 miles from Weir Farm and contains a number of historic and non-historic industrial buildings no longer actively used.

#### **Overflow Parking**

Overflow parking for special events would have been available at the visitor center. If adequate space was not available, the NPS would have developed a cooperative agreement with the Towns of Wilton and/or Ridgefield or with a private owner to park vehicles during peak visitation and special events.

#### **PROGRAMS**

##### **Artists-in-Residence**

In this alternative, the site would have offered artists in the artists-in-residence program studio space in the Burlingham barn, which required rehabilitation for year-round use. No housing would have been provided.

### **Arts Education**

Certain components of the arts education program would have taken place at the historic farm, while others, including workshops, would have been conducted at the off-site visitor center. A triangular transportation system—between schools, the site, and the visitor center—would have been required for a successful arts education program.

### **Special Exhibitions**

A program of special exhibitions would have been presented in the off-site visitor center and at other museums in the area. In this alternative, the visitor center would have included more exhibition space than the visitor center proposed in the plan.

### **Other Programs**

Programs that required indoor workshop or lecture space would have been offered only at the visitor center or at other locations.

## ***Alternative 3: Weir Farm as a Protected Cultural Resource***

### **CONCEPT**

Alternative 3 proposed to manage the site only minimally, acting only when necessary to preserve and interpret park resources modestly and according to a scenario of continued economic uncertainty. This alternative indicated how the park would have been managed if neither the plan or Alternative 2 could have been implemented. It also reflected the current site management approach, which emphasizes stabilizing park resources and deferring major actions pending the completion of this General Management Plan and related studies.

This approach concentrated staff efforts on protecting the site's cultural resources. Visitor services and interpretive programs, of secondary importance to resource protection, would have been developed on a very limited basis as space, facilities, and funds allowed.

No additional facilities would have been developed in Alternative 3.

### **VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

In this alternative, visitors would have been greeted in an on-site visitor station (complete with rest rooms) in the main barn. Some form of interpretive media, focusing on only the major interpretive themes, would have introduced them to Weir Farm and its occupants. Because substantially less effort would have been put toward portraying historic periods in this alternative than in the plan and Alternative 2, the on-site visitor station assumed greater importance despite its limited space.

The main house would have been used as a space for art exhibitions, with a primary concentration on interpreting art associated with the site rather than on the lives and activities of the artists who lived there.

Interpretation at the Weir studio would have focused on Weir's, Dorothy Weir Young's and Sperry Andrews' use of the structure. The Young studio, because it is larger and associated with other artists, would have interpreted the continuous use of the site. As in the plan and Alternative 2, visitors would have been encouraged to walk around the grounds, but guided tours and brochures offering self-guided tours would have only been offered as resources allowed.

### **WEIR COMPLEX**

#### **Landscape**

The landscape would have been protected and maintained as it currently exists through a program of mowing, pruning, and other actions designed to discourage vegetative succession and preserve the existing landscape pattern.

#### **Structures**

The main barn would have been rehabilitated for use as a visitor station, which would have included rest rooms, orientation, and limited exhibits on the artists who occupied the site. The Weir and Young studios

## PART TWO: THE PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

would have been preserved and interpreted as they are today, not restored. The main house would have been presented not as a historic house but as a space for the exhibition of art, objects, and furnishings from all periods of the site's history.

### **Collections**

A state-of-the-art storage facility would have been developed for works of art and artifacts in a rehabilitated portion of the main barn. Additional storage space would have been provided off-site, if possible, in cooperation with area museums.

Art equipment and studio furnishings associated with J. Alden Weir, Dorothy Weir Young, and Sperry Andrews would have been exhibited, to the greatest extent possible, in the Weir studio, but because of environmental issues and the need to protect and *preserve the collections, the studio would have housed* far fewer objects than at present. Similarly, the Young studio would have exhibited works of art and furnishings associated with Young and Andrews according to their vulnerability to the environment and their capacity to represent fully the continuous use of the studio. The historic furnishings report would have guided the placement of furnishings in the studios. In order to protect the collections, art and artifacts would have been rotated from collections storage to the main house and other appropriate spaces.

### **BURLINGHAM COMPLEX**

#### **Landscape**

The landscape would have been preserved as it is at present and protected by a regular maintenance program. No garden rehabilitation would have been pursued.

#### **Structures**

The structures within the Burlingham complex would have been rehabilitated for contemporary uses. All building exteriors would have been repaired and stabilized to preserve their current appearance.

Both floors of the Burlingham house would have been used for administrative offices and research space. The Burlingham barn would have been adapted to house special educational programs and cultural events.

### **POND AND WOODLAND AREA**

#### **Landscape**

The landscape would have been preserved as it currently exists and protected by a regular maintenance program.

#### **Structures**

As in Alternative 2, the caretaker's house would have been rehabilitated to provide housing for an on-site park ranger, and the caretaker's garage/barn would have been adapted to store maintenance equipment and supplies. Building exteriors would have been repaired and stabilized to preserve their current appearance.

### **NEW FACILITIES**

The new 15-car parking area across from the Burlingham house would have been expanded to accommodate a space where buses and shuttles could discharge and pick up visitors.

This alternative would have required leasing a facility for site administration and maintenance and possibly curatorial functions. This facility would have contained at least 4,500 square feet of heated interior space and 1,000 square feet of unheated storage area. It would also have offered limited space for staff parking.

### **BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND LAND PROTECTION**

This alternative proposed no property acquisition.

#### **Overflow Parking**

The NPS would have pursued informal agreements with the towns of Ridgefield and/or Wilton or with private property owners to secure space for bus and overflow car parking during peak visitation and special events.

## **PROGRAMS**

### **Artists-in-Residence**

No artists' studios or accommodations would have been provided in this alternative, though the site would have welcomed visiting artists as the Weir Farm Heritage Trust has in the past (see the "Existing Interpretation and Visitor Use Programs" in Part Three of this document).

### **Arts Education**

Art workshops for schools would have taken place in the Burlingham barn, which would have required rehabilitation for year-round use. School programming would have also taken place in the facilities on the site that are open to all visitors, including the main house, the studios, and the landscape. Because staffing would have been extremely limited in this alternative, teachers themselves would have needed to organize and staff school programs at Weir Farm.

### **Special Exhibitions**

This alternative could not have accommodated temporary or permanent exhibitions because no museum quality exhibition space would have been available. The special exhibition program would have been conducted exclusively through the cooperation of area museums.

### **Other Programs**

Programs requiring indoor space, including lectures or workshops, would have taken place in the Burlingham barn when school programs were not in session there.

## ***Alternatives Considered But Rejected***

The planning team considered numerous other issues and proposals as it developed alternatives for Weir Farm, but for the reasons outlined here they were not included in any alternative.

### **DEVELOPING AN ON-SITE VISITOR CENTER**

The planning team's second newsletter included a proposal in the article, "Weir Farm: the Gathering Place" to build a new visitor center on the site. As more information became available on the farm's historic painting sites and its cultural landscape, however, the team realized that locations where access and geophysical features would permit the construction of a visitor center were also locations with high concentrations of historic painting sites. Because of the fragility of the cultural landscape and the need to preserve its historic features, the team rejected this proposal.

### **RESTORING THE LANDSCAPE TO THE WEIR PERIOD**

The second newsletter also included a proposal to restore the landscape throughout the site to the period from 1882 to 1919 when J. Alden Weir occupied the site. This proposal would have entailed removing all structural and landscape features added since Weir's death. Because doing so would involve a great deal of removal and replacement of historic features and would make it impossible to achieve the objective of demonstrating the site's continuous use by artists, this recommendation was modified. The Weir studio, the structure associated most closely with J. Alden Weir, would be furnished and interpreted to the time of his use of the structure, and the landscape of the Weir complex would be restored to about 1940 to show those features Weir built or modified that the Youngs later retained.



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PART TWO: THE PLAN  
AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

### **REFURNISHING THE MAIN HOUSE TO THE WEIR PERIOD**

The second newsletter included a proposal to restore the main house to the time that Weir lived in it. As more information on historic furnishings became available, the team realized that the Youngs retained many of Weir's furnishings on the first floor; only the installation of the library and wall treatments were substantially different. As with the landscape, refurnishing the house to the Weir period would have substantially limited presentation of the property's continuous use by the Young and Andrews families, therefore providing a more limited experience for visitors.

### **PROVIDING MUSEUM QUALITY ENVIRONMENTS IN HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

The structures at Weir Farm National Historic Site are historically significant. Originally constructed for people to live and work in, none were designed specifically to exhibit works of art. Thus they lack the appropriate environmental and security controls. They do not have the physical capacity to stabilize or control relative humidity, one of the principal requirements for preserving works of art and artifacts such as historic furnishings over long periods of time. The team considered extensive structural modifications and the installation of more sophisticated environmental controls for the sustained exhibition of art, but rejected these proposals on the grounds that such actions would alter the historic fabric of the structures and could threaten their long-term survival.

### **EXPANDING THE SITE TO INCLUDE A PROTECTION AREA**

During the planning process, the team considered a proposal to enlarge the site's boundaries to encompass a "protection area," 24 additional residential properties. The proposed change would have added approximately 43 acres to Weir Farm. Acquiring these parcels would have permitted the NPS to modify or remove the structures on them and thus to create a buffer zone

protecting the historic center of the farm from any visual intrusions. Such an action would have been taken to enhance visitors' appreciation of the site and to ensure its protection from encroachment in the long term. After careful analysis, however, the team concluded that this proposal was too costly and infeasible to be seriously considered at this time.

### **ALLOWING AN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE TO OCCUPY THE UPSTAIRS OF THE MAIN HOUSE**

The team considered a proposal to allow an artist-in-residence to occupy the upstairs of the main house while offering public tours of the first floor. The team rejected this proposal because occupation of the house would result in visitor/occupant conflicts; increase potential for hazards resulting from fire or water damage; and would also place greater stress on the house's historic fabric.

## SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

<p><b>THE PLAN</b></p> <p><b>Concept</b></p> <p>Presents the farm as it appeared historically and reunites the landscape with the art it inspired.</p>	<p><b>ALTERNATIVE 2</b></p> <p><b>Concept</b></p> <p>Emphasizes the site's continuous use by preserving it as is, a "work of art" where three generations of artists worked and lived.</p>	<p><b>ALTERNATIVE 3</b></p> <p><b>Concept</b></p> <p>Preserves the farm with only those actions necessary to protect and minimally interpret its current resources.</p>
<p><b>Visitor Facilities</b></p> <p>Visitor center in a rehabilitated structure near (within one-mile radius of) the site.</p> <p>Site orientation, interpretive materials and exhibitions in visitor center, including works of art inspired by the site, and exhibits on site preservation.</p> <p>Visitor parking (25 cars) at visitor center; shuttle conveys visitors who choose not to walk to the site; bus/special event parking in commercial district.</p> <p>Lectures, art classes, school and other programs in the rehabilitated Burlingham barn.</p>	<p><b>Visitor Facilities</b></p> <p>Visitor center in rehabilitated building off-site (within three-mile radius).</p> <p>Site orientation, interpretive materials and exhibitions in visitor center, including works of art inspired by the site and exhibits on site preservation.</p> <p>Visitor parking at off-site location; shuttle conveys visitors to contact station in main barn that contains rest rooms and assembly area for tours; bus/special event parking at off-site center or in commercial district.</p> <p>Lectures, art classes, school and other programs in the off-site visitor center.</p>	<p><b>Visitor Facilities</b></p> <p>Visitor contact station in main barn.</p> <p>Limited site orientation and interpretive exhibits in visitor contact station.</p> <p>Visitor parking opposite the Burlingham house, across Nod Hill Road; bus/special event parking in commercial district.</p> <p>Lectures, art classes, school and other programs in the Burlingham barn.</p>
<p><b>Historic Structures</b></p> <p>Weir complex historic structures restored and interpreted. Weir studio restored to interpret life and work of Weir; main house interpreted to reflect use by Weir, Young, and Andrews families; Young studio restored to interpret work of Young. Family artifacts and furnishings displayed in documented locations whenever possible.</p> <p>Young studio also contains exhibits on Sperry Andrews.</p> <p>NPS seeks to acquire family artifacts.</p> <p>Burlingham complex historic structures rehabilitated for contemporary uses: house adapted for artists-in-residence housing; barn adapted for school/other programs.</p> <p>Caretaker's house rehabilitated to house on-site park ranger.</p> <p>Caretaker's garage/barn rehabilitated and expanded (following footprint of missing section) for artists-in-residence studios.</p>	<p><b>Historic Structures</b></p> <p>Weir complex historic structures preserved as is and interpreted. All structures to reflect continuous use by Weir, Young, and Andrews families. Family artifacts and furnishings displayed in existing locations whenever possible.</p> <p>Young studio exhibits art and art materials used by Young and Andrews.</p> <p>NPS seeks to acquire family artifacts.</p> <p>Burlingham complex historic structures rehabilitated for contemporary uses: house will contain administrative offices/archival space; barn will be adapted for artists-in-residence studios. No on-site artists-in-residence housing.</p> <p>Caretaker's house rehabilitated to house on-site park ranger.</p> <p>Caretaker's garage/barn rehabilitated to store maintenance equipment and supplies.</p>	<p><b>Historic Structures</b></p> <p>Weir complex historic structures preserved as is and interpreted. Weir and Young studios appear as they do today, with family artifacts displayed in existing locations whenever possible, to reflect the Weir, Young, and Andrews family tenures; main house used as art exhibition space; main barn rehabilitated for visitor contact/collection storage.</p> <p>Young studio exhibits art and art materials used by Young and Andrews.</p> <p>NPS seeks to acquire family artifacts.</p> <p>Burlingham complex historic structures rehabilitated for contemporary uses: house will contain staff offices/archival space; barn will be used for school/other programs. No on-site artists-in-residence housing or studio space.</p> <p>Caretaker's house rehabilitated to house on-site park ranger.</p> <p>Caretaker's garage/barn rehabilitated to store maintenance equipment and supplies.</p>

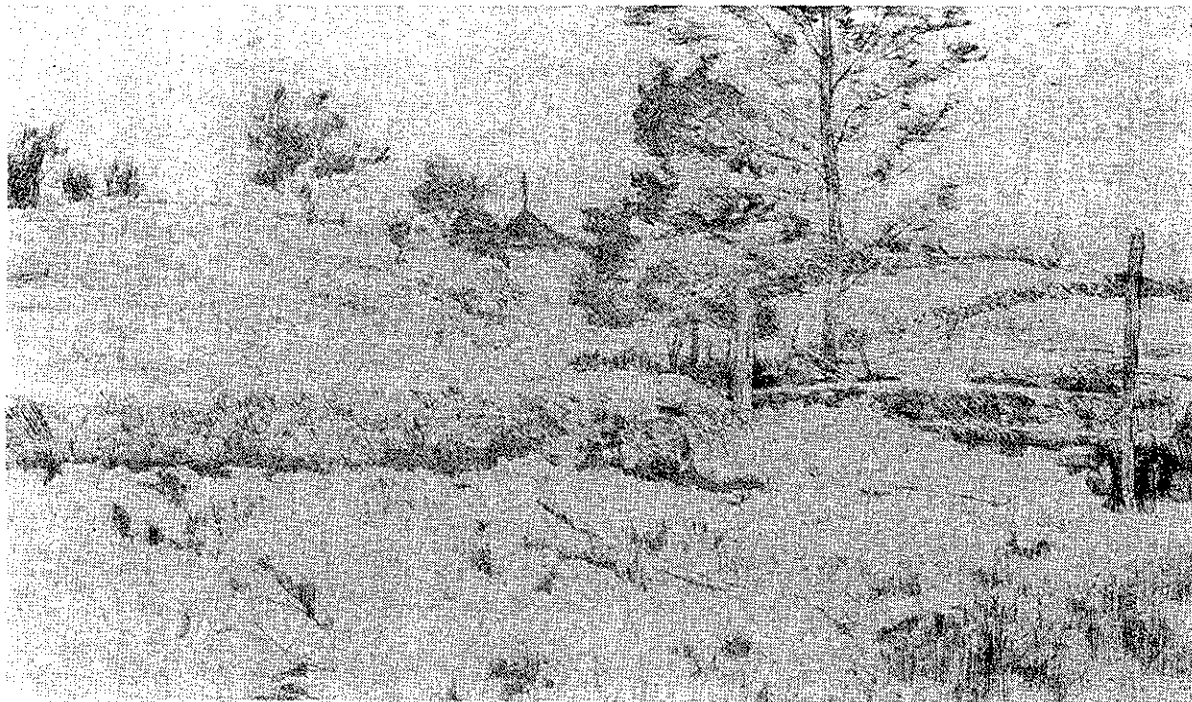
# SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <p>Weir complex landscape restored to ca 1940s appearance to reflect use by the Weirs and Youngs; features of landscape during their tenures to be repaired or replaced (research permitting).</p> <p>Burlingham complex landscape rehabilitated to retain changes Cora Weir Burlingham made after 1940.</p> <p>Pond and woodland area landscape restored to re-establish select farm fields and other missing features that existed circa 1940.</p> <p>Path system expanded to form loop that links key park sites.</p>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <p>All landscape preserved as is and maintained.</p> <p>Existing path system mapped and marked; new path from shuttle drop-off north of chicken house to main barn visitor contact station.</p>	<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <p>All landscape preserved as is and maintained.</p> <p>Existing path system mapped and marked.</p>
<p><b>Administrative Facilities</b></p> <p>Administration / maintenance facility in a rehabilitated structure nearby park property.</p> <p>Collections care and storage area, curatorial offices, and library in visitor center near site.</p> <p>Housing for on-site park ranger in rehabilitated caretaker's house.</p> <p>Peak visitation/special event overflow parking in commercial district, at off-site locations.</p>	<p><b>Administrative Facilities</b></p> <p>Administration / maintenance facility in new structures at northeast end of park, off Weir Farm Lane. Administrative offices and archival space at off-site visitor center and in Burlingham house.</p> <p>Collections care and storage, curatorial offices, and library in remote, off-site visitor center.</p> <p>Housing for on-site park ranger in rehabilitated caretaker's house.</p> <p>Peak visitation/special event overflow parking at off-site visitor center or commercial district.</p>	<p><b>Administrative Facilities</b></p> <p>Maintenance operation in off-site, leased space. Administrative offices in rehabilitated Burlingham house.</p> <p>Collection care and storage in rehabilitated main barn. Curatorial offices and research area in rehabilitated Burlingham house.</p> <p>Housing for on-site park ranger in rehabilitated caretaker's house.</p> <p>Peak visitation/special event overflow parking in commercial district at off-site locations.</p>

## SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

<p><b>Interpretation and Programs</b></p> <p>Programs, printed materials, exhibits, and other interpretive media will emphasize the site's continuous use by artists, while highlighting the site's historic significance.</p> <p>Interpretative programs held at farm and nearby visitor center.</p> <p>Artists-in-residence program will offer studio space and housing.</p> <p>Arts education program in rehabilitated Burlingham barn and in area schools.</p> <p>Guided tours of main house and studios.</p> <p>Farming practices interpreted in restored main barn.</p> <p>Brochures permit self-guided tours of site history and painting sites.</p>	<p><b>Interpretation and Programs</b></p> <p>Programs, printed materials, exhibits, and other interpretive media will emphasize the site's continuous use by artists, while highlighting the site's historic significance.</p> <p>Interpretative programs held at farm and at remote visitor center.</p> <p>Artists-in-residence program will offer studio space. Housing will not be provided.</p> <p>Arts education program at off-site visitor center and area schools.</p> <p>Guided tours of main house and studios.</p> <p>Portion of main barn used for visitor contact station.</p> <p>Brochures permit self-guided tour of painting sites.</p>	<p><b>Interpretation and Programs</b></p> <p>Programs, printed materials, exhibits, and other interpretive media will emphasize the site's continuous use by artists, while highlighting the site's historic significance.</p> <p>Limited interpretative programs, on site, as space and staff allow.</p> <p>Visiting artist program offered; no artists-in-residence program.</p> <p>Arts education programs at rehabilitated Burlingham barn and staffed by teachers of visiting school groups.</p> <p>Self-guided tour of main house art exhibitions; guided tours of studios available as resources allow.</p> <p>Brochures, available as resources allow, permit self-guided tours of grounds.</p>
<p><b>Land Protection</b></p> <p>NPS works with adjacent neighbors to promote vegetative screening between site and residential properties.</p> <p>Acquisition of nearby properties for a visitor center and administration / maintenance facility. Land acquisition by NPS will require a congressionally authorized boundary change.</p>	<p><b>Land Protection</b></p> <p>NPS works with adjacent neighbors to promote vegetative screening between site and residential properties.</p> <p>Acquisition of properties for a visitor center. Land acquisition by NPS will require a congressionally authorized boundary change.</p>	<p><b>Land Protection</b></p> <p>No land acquisition.</p>

PART THREE:  
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT



J. ALDEN WEIR, *Landscape, Branchville*, NOT DATED, ETCHING, 4 5/8 X 7 1/16 IN.

WEIR FARM HERITAGE TRUST

## Cultural Environment

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### J. Alden Weir's Place in American Art

J. Alden Weir (1852-1919) was a much admired artist in his time and a pioneer of the Impressionist movement in America. He was also an influential teacher and cultural leader who greatly aided the cause of American art in the years when the United States was becoming a world power. His warm personality made him the natural focus of a large circle of gifted colleagues, who eagerly sought his company, advice, and approval.

That Weir won great fame as an Impressionist around the turn of the century is somewhat surprising, because both art critics and the public found his paintings difficult to appreciate. Weir's Impressionism is not bright and pretty but quiet, complex, elusive. Duncan Phillips (founder of the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.) was among those who recognized that Weir's art needs to be lived with for a long time before its profound serenity and unity of purpose can be understood. Weir's daughter Dorothy remembered that her father disliked "having everything taken in at a glance but preferred instead that things should disclose themselves to you gradually, when you were least expecting it."

Weir was, moreover, an experimenter for whom, as fellow artist Kenyon Cox once wrote, each picture was a new problem for which a new solution had to be found. Some critics of his era were keenly aware of Weir's experimentation, yet others who looked at his quiet, unpretentious art regarded the artist as "anything but a revolutionist," as one of them phrased it. If Weir's Impressionism was not easily understood in his own time, it is no more accessible in our own. It remains rewarding, however, for people who make the effort to look and comprehend.

Weir's central role in American Impressionism cannot be disputed. It was recognized in his own day and it

continues to be in ours. Weir was one of the first American artists to turn to Impressionism, he was the close friend of John Henry Twachtman, Theodore Robinson, and Childe Hassam, who are regularly cited as other leaders of the movement, and he was a founding member of The Ten American Painters, the group that came to be thought of as the core of Impressionism in America. While turn-of-the-century critics and connoisseurs enjoyed some other American Impressionists more than Weir (or Twachtman, who was even less understood), they agreed that Weir was one of the foremost painters of his day.

Present day art historians also readily acknowledge J. Alden Weir's importance to the American Impressionist movement, even as some of them, too, continue to dispute the value of his art. Some maintain he was uneven in quality, behind the times, or not totally committed to Impressionist concepts and techniques. Others respond that Weir chose to reject certain aspects of Impressionism, that unevenness is inevitable when an artist is an experimenter, and that far from being a decade or two behind the work of the French artists who inspired him, Weir was often abreast or even ahead of the most advanced art ideas of his era.

Outmoded and ignored while abstract art dominated the art world, American Impressionism itself was rediscovered only about 15 years ago. Some art historians still dismiss the entire movement as a pallid imitation of French Impressionism. Increasingly, however, art experts are saying that its mingling of American ideas about nature and landscape painting with elements of both French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism resulted in an aesthetic that deserves consideration on its own terms. That there is now intense interest in American Impressionism on the part of both art experts and the public is attested to by the spate of recent books and exhibitions about it. American Impressionism is now so firmly embedded in the story of American art that there seems little chance of its being forgotten again.